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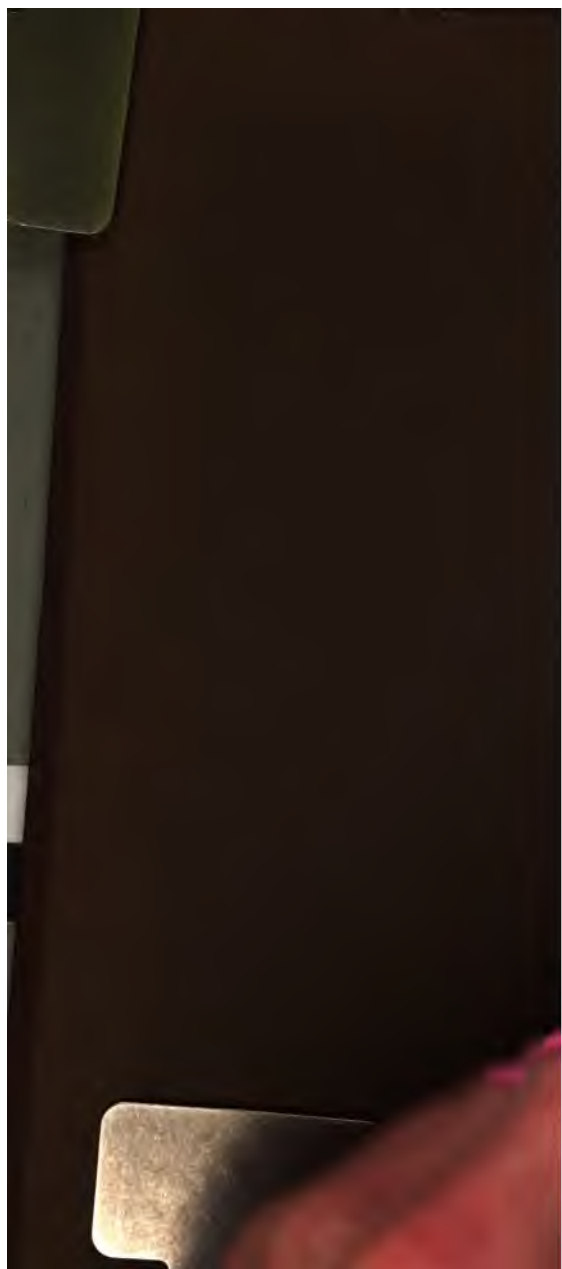
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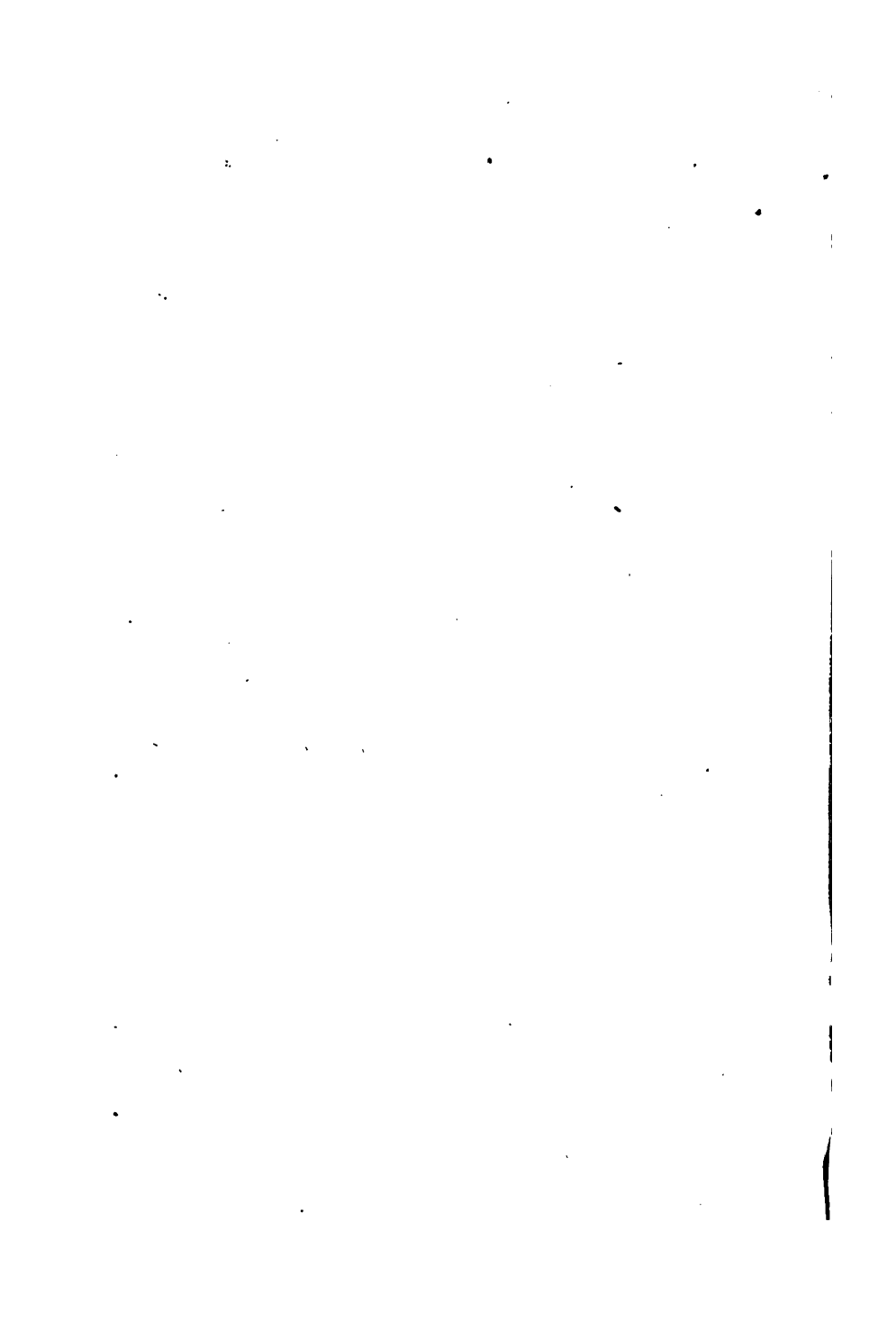
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THOUGHTS
ON THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE.



BY THE LATE
HETTY BOWMAN.





Thoughts on the Christian Life.



Thoughts on the Christian Life;

OR,

LEAVES FROM LETTERS.

BY THE LATE

HETTY BOWMAN,

Author of

"Thoughts for Workers and Sufferers." "Studies in the Psalms," etc.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

MRS. GORDON,

"The Home Life of Sir David Brewster," etc.



London :

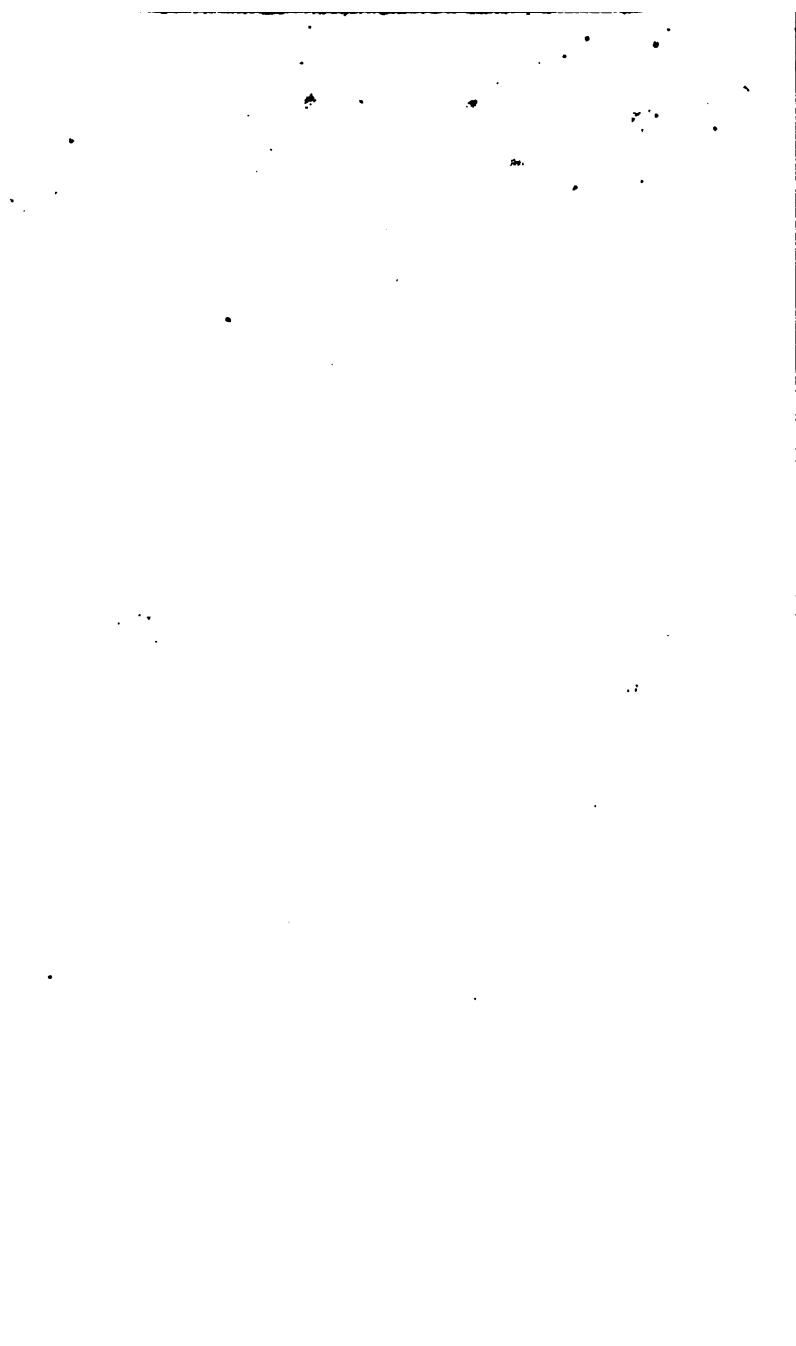
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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

UNDER the touching circumstances of the early and lamented death of her who wrote this volume, I cannot refuse a request made to me, that I should write a few prefatory lines: the name of "Hetty Bowman" is now, however, so widely known, that it seems well nigh superfluous.

It was a mournful pleasure, in the course of a recent tour in France and Spain, to find her books chosen as travelling companions by those who had never seen her face in the flesh. The rapid progress of her name and fame, and the peculiar feelings of gratitude so often expressed by strangers, gave the prospect of a literary career of brilliant usefulness; checked now this may be, but not altogether disappointed, for by her works she will long

“speak” to us, and we cannot doubt that where she sees God’s face, and lives for evermore, still higher degrees of service are appointed for her.

Just before leaving England I had the pleasure of going over with my beloved friend several of these “leaves,” and judging from them, I believe that the volume will fully sustain her reputation for the keen yet chastened observation of life and character, and for the practical lessons of sanctified wisdom which characterize her other writings. She bestowed much pains on this work, more, she told me, than on any other, even in her weak and suffering state, not “offering to the Lord that which cost” her “nothing.” May He graciously continue the wide personal application and blessing so signally granted on every previous occasion.

M. M. GORDON.

VICHY.

May 17th, 1872.

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A REMINISCENCE.

YOU want to know how I like S——? Well, my dear Mary, as to the place, it must be confessed that asphalt pavements, new houses in red and white brick, forming streets which run with painful regularity at right angles, and never show the slightest sign of a curve,—are not suggestive, and slightly apt to become monotonous. True, there is the misty grey line which, to clearer sight than mine, means the sea,—and there is the pure breeze which sweeps up the Channel, bringing health, if it is not keen enough to bring neuralgia. And there are the life-giving odours that some people do not love,—tarry, sea-weedy breaths; whose salt savour is as welcome, in its way, as the scent of hawthorn or hay. But still I cannot grow enthusiastic about it. I have not yet recovered the transplanting process, not being of a nature to strike ready roots into new soil. There are times when, to borrow Miss

Thackeray's image, all the sunshine of the world seems concentrated on one spot, *where we are not*. But, after a while, the clouds move. Light breaks through them in little glints here and there, and falls on other places, showing much we had never hoped to find again. Unexpected compensations arise too, and tiny odds and ends of happiness, small in themselves, but forming when woven together a tolerably stout strand, begin to form such "ties" as bind us to any scene in which our lot is cast.

And, for me, the remembrance of one life, lived in these straight streets, transforms their very ugliness into beauty. You have heard me speak of dear Mrs. F——, and you know that, very lately, the story of her "suffering, affliction, and patience," ended in her "falling asleep." But you do not know—no one can—what was lost to me when her death left one less in the wide, wide world.

I remember her first on a visit at her house, when I was about fifteen. She was not married then, and most people would have thought it very unlikely she ever would be. A "regular old maid:" one could hardly imagine her anything else, and the whole ménage was in the same style with its mistress,—unexceptionably fresh and pure and neat. Oh, so neat! She never worried one with order, but

anything out of its place looked so terribly *wrong* that one felt rebuked into tidiness. At least one did generally. Now and then I was conscious of a reverse effect, and felt a wicked impulse to ink table covers, and crumple up couvrettes. But she would have taken it so sweetly that there would have been no sort of satisfaction in doing it. Yet she could be made angry. She was by no means one of the imperturbably amiable people who irritate by their placidity. Her still grey eyes could flash fire upon occasion, and I have seen her roses pale into a white heat. Now and then too, perhaps, the gentle lips did "speak unadvisedly"—to my great consolation, who found it so hard to guard my own.

I do not think a girl of fifteen is a very companionable creature. I was uncomfortable enough, I know,—certainly to myself, and, I suspect, to most of my friends. But she knew how to touch me without irritating. She could sympathize with restless wayward impulses, which others thought it their duty to lecture. She listened to what I said without being shocked at it, and when I oscillated between one heresy and another she kept her patient faith that I should settle into orthodoxy at last. She did not scold me, but I knew she prayed for me, and her own look of perfect rest and delight, as she bent over her little Bible, did me more good than many

sermons. It taught me that most of the dark places I stumbled at were in my own heart, and not in God's Word; and that, to one who leaned on it as she leaned, and on Him, the Word incarnate, with whom she walked as her living Lord, life might be always full of brave endurance, and sometimes of joyous worship.

I do not know whether her marriage was in prospect at that time or not. Many a woman keeps her youth, because of a secret hope, unacknowledged, even to herself; coming events sometimes send bright shadows before them, just as the spring breezes bring messages of summer.

One day I spent with her in her new home. We did not talk much, I remember. My lips would not shape themselves to say *Mrs.*, even when I sat between her and her husband at dinner, and saw her eyes shining as they rested on his. They were a rare couple. For those who knew them, it was enough to say that they were worthy of one another, set each to each, like "perfect music unto noblest words."

One year, one bright brief year of love and rest was given her, and then she was left a "widow indeed and desolate." The next time I saw her she was again in the old home at S——, whither she returned to wait once more for her bridal. Meekly she waited, through years of suffering and slowly

increasing helplessness,—of uselessness, *she* would have said, but not so her Master, for she served Him even then; and of the service hereafter for which He was training her, there may be much in His own words, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

She was a picture to remember, seated in her low rocking-chair by the fire,—her husband’s portrait hanging above her, and the dress she wore in his memory suited so well her slight figure and pure chastened face. She had a word of quiet wisdom, or of most tender sympathy, for all who came; and the burdens left with her were sure of being taken to God, and pleaded for as if they had been her own. How I loved to sit on a stool by her side, and feel the soft caressing touch of her hand upon my hair. It seemed to draw the fever out of one’s very heart, and reach the sore spot there with some cool balm of healing. She never dwelt upon her own grief. If she spoke of what had been taken, it was only as she looked on to the day which should give her treasures back; and meanwhile she mourned with others whose lives were left empty, and bade them take hope and endure, for One remained.

Her death was a “going home” indeed. “Clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, nearer and nearer,” was the testimony of one who saw her when she

was close to the brink of the river. She is across it now.

“After the burden and heat of the day,
The starry calm of night ;
After the rough and toilsome way,
A sleep in the robe of white.”

I would not bring her back. There is blessing and strength for a life-time in the memory of such a friend, even though the sense of loss can never wholly die. She taught me—I wish I could pass on the lesson—what an older woman may be to a girl. The friendship between such is as holy and helpful as it is rare. I should be content, I think, if, years hence, I might give to some uncertain troubled heart what God taught her to give to me. How little they know, who are shut up in silent sick-rooms, or “hindered” by the restrictions of weakness, what work they do for Christ by the mere power of their saintly living.

“EVERY DAY.”

“**H**ow hard it is,” you say, “that so much of one’s time is taken up with things that must be done, and yet don’t any of them seem worth doing!” Ah, that is not a new difficulty, dear! The hermits of the East stumbled over it, and the monks of the West; and many a one who has not left, like them, the every-day life of the world, has groaned under it, as if there were guilt in the weight as well as care.

One thing, however, we are sure of,—that all God sends to any human soul must have its meaning. There is nothing, however trivial, which He cannot make a means of grace. It is for us to take it as such, or to scorn it. There is blessing wrapped for us in every lowly duty, and if we despise its homely dress the loss and the responsibility are our own.

“But mine are such common duties,” you say, —“helping in the house, or sewing for the children. It’s all such material work.” I think I have been

learning, lately, that we may not call anything common which God has cleansed; and has not His consecrating touch fallen on all home-toil and care, material though it may appear, since Jesus lived in the workshop at Nazareth? He counts nothing unclean, nothing unworthy of Him, but sin. His love in the heart will purify all it touches. It has transmuting power enough to change the dross of the common street into the fine gold of the sanctuary. And so the "base things of the world, and things which are despised," become, when laid on the altar which sanctifies the gift, things which God has chosen.

Well, you admit all this in the abstract, but I can hear your question, over all the miles of distance between us, "What is the use of it all? If I have made a pudding for dinner, or turned Lucy's frock, has my time been spent worthily of an immortal being, with powers which are surely fitted for nobler employment?" I might say much in answer to that, but I will dwell only on one "use of it all," which you can hardly question: do not each of these things furnish you with an occasion of offering up your will to God? You may turn them all into sacrifices, and they will be truer than many which you bring in sight of other eyes, and with much complacency to yourself. I think too that we are all in danger of dwelling too much on what we do:

too little on what *we are*. God's work *by us* we may leave with Him: His work *in us*, our being and our becoming, is surely our first care. And the truest helps to this are the small self-denials in which we oftenest fail. We yield them indeed, but grudgingly and of necessity, not with the free heart of a cheerful giver. So, when you are tempted to murmur over a wasted day, may you not feel that each bit of "useless drudgery" has had its place in working out for you God's great design, that each of His children should be conformed to the image of His Son?

Yes: but still you sigh and wish we might be without all these things,—so much care for the body is very humiliating. Is not the time spent upon it a robbing of God? Of course it may be, unless the body is brought into subjection. But we cannot live in this world, constituted as we are, without some care for it. If we try to do so, we shall be requiring of ourselves what we cannot possibly perform; what God, who knows us, has never asked. We are not all spirit yet, and, so long as mind is linked with matter, it cannot accomplish much without some thought of its companion, and we must be content to wear fetters till we are free. God's hand will strike them off when we are ready for liberty; but, till He does, there must be some purpose in our bearing them. And, if we struggle too impatiently, we may be

rebellng against His appointment. We cannot tell how the discipline is to be wrought out by which He prepares us for His presence, but there are indications that much of it comes through our bearing the yoke of physical humiliation.

Of this I feel more and more deeply assured,—and the thought would help us much, I think, to bear the “every dayness” of life,—that all the passing occupations with which our time is taken up have an element of the eternal in them, and, in their issues, stretch far away into the unseen and everlasting. The outside husk of them, so to speak, perishes with the using, but within it is a living soul of impulse and influence which perishes not.

For in every moment of our days, when once our hearts are yielded to His service, God is working in us and through us. Hitherto, perhaps, our little world has only been large enough to hold self and the present. But gradually, through tender leadings and unfoldings, and may be through pain and suffering, we come to learn life’s lesson,—that it is God’s world, not ours; that our existence is not finished and rounded off here, but forms part of one vast scheme to which mind and heart and spirit expand and grow, while all the horizon round them grows and expands too, until it touches the shore of the illimitable future, and we become conscious that

earth and heaven are not so far separated but that the first is but the vestibule of the second,—imperfect, cloudy, full of broken fragments, but still part of the same Temple of God as that to which we shall pass in by and by.

And there is one command which, in its fulfilment, consecrates our working days as well as our Sundays: "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Do you think *He* cares whether we are doing this or that, while each thing is "unto Him"? God asks from us simple obedience:—not some wonderful piece of consecration, or what to us seems such, but that, hour by hour and day by day, we should follow His will. Perhaps, for the present, that will for you may be to be "faithful in a very little," but if we will not do a little thing to please Him, we should not do a greater. It is easy to make great sacrifices when God does not ask them, but to give up our own will in each detail of life is something far harder. And this is what He *does* ask. To hold ourselves ever in readiness for His bidding—to count no token of it too slight—such is His call to each. Thus only shall we be ready for further service if He sees fit to lead us on to it.

Mrs. S—— gave me a number of little books for you the other day, but I do not think I shall send them. I would rather send you out on the moor

with your Bible, than make you read through a bundle of tracts. You would be more likely to get rid of mental cobwebs. For I feel very strongly, dear, that it is your duty, now and then, to go and get a healthy talk with nature, if only for ten minutes. She will do more for your scruples, if you will let her, than many a book of introspective theology. I am sure that Christians who will not look at the loveliness which God has spread everywhere,—who have no ears for the speech through which He utters, as in a parable, His own teaching,—lose more than they know. For the entire visible world is a shadowing forth of the “invisible things of God.” Its beauty is a “wayside sacrament,” full of a most real Presence. And, when we pass it by with eyes that seeing see not, we lose a part of the heritage which is His children’s right. I wish you could have been with me in my walk this morning. It did not extend beyond the garden, but I wanted no more than I found there,—masses of white cloud floating in bluest sky, flowers and wet leaves glistening with fresh rain-drops—the sunlight making a picture out of every shrub—and the soft wind bringing sweetness from the hay-fields it had passed. If you had been with me I believe many of your difficulties would have solved themselves; and some, perhaps, if you were there every-day, would never arise at all.

FAULT-FINDING.

DID you ever consider the amount of good, and certainly of pleasure, of which we are deprived by our growing habits of criticism? In the highest things I am sure this is the case. Criticism of sermons for instance, I think we can hardly estimate the evil of it. I know there is much to be allowed about those of the present day, that too many are "flat, stale, and unprofitable;" either, as some one says, "altitudinarian, latitudinarian, or platitudinarian." But I know, for myself, that the help they might bring is lessened by listening as a judge instead of a learner. And every sermon, even the poorest, has so much more truth in it than we are *living out*, that we have greater reason to feel condemned than to condemn. It is good to remember how little we know, how much less we do, how far the lowest standard stretches beyond our attainment. And even when the criticism ends in praise, it does not tend any the more to

profit. We pick the flower to pieces till we lose its fragrance. Perhaps, too, what we can coolly analyse has not touched us very deeply: or, if it does, the emotion passes off into the analysis, and leaves the life uninfluenced.

But, to come lower, an immense amount of discomfort, not to say harm, results from—what shall I call it?—domestic criticism. You feel, in some families, as if you were living between the glasses of a microscope. Manner, accent, expression, all that goes to make up your “personality,” all that you do or leave undone, is commented upon and found fault with. I have seen sensitive natures harden into positive ugliness under this constant pressure. Some characters have force enough to resist it,—but others are crushed, I was going to say, out of shape,—certainly out of their own natural shape, into one they would never have assumed if they had been let alone. From being analysed by others they begin to analyse themselves, till they are overgrown by morbid self-consciousness. They become untrue to their own nature; they are criticised into falseness; and they know, painfully enough, that they are “not themselves.” They have been instructed how to look, and move, and speak, and think, till they have lost all power to throw off the yoke, although it galls them. But they feel that,

under the spell of that dreadful question—What will so and so think?—they say what they do not mean, and do exactly what they would not do. “Very silly,” you are strong-minded enough to reply. Very! But when you live with so and so, and are compelled to listen to the expression of his or her opinion, delivered probably with small softening, you feel the “continual dropping,” and are worn by it, in spite of protests to yourself that it is a trifle, and beneath your notice.

This habit of criticism, undue interference, needless comment, or whatever else it may be called, is dignified by some of one’s friends as “faithfulness.” “It is not pleasant,” they say, “but they must be faithful.” Very disinterested: but I nevertheless hold to the belief that their faithfulness is not altogether disagreeable to them. And, as to the effect of it, have you not felt many a time the hopelessness which settles down on you like a November fog, when something you have striven to do well with your fingers or your head, is met by,—

“Yes, my dear: its very pretty, very. But I don’t think your colours are well chosen. It would have been better if you had put mauve instead of white.”
Or——

“Yes: that is well written. But why did you choose such a worn-out subject?”

Now of course we all need such candour, and may be very thankful for it in certain measure. We can only have it from the inner circle; outsiders do not care enough about us to take the trouble of pointing out even the faults they see. But one may have too much of a good thing, and it is the excess of fault-finding that I am pleading against, especially when it is minute and captious. With some people it becomes a mere habit; they slip into depreciation before they are aware.

"Evil is wrought for want of thought
More than for want of heart."

But this same want of thought is an evil in itself—one to be resisted. This is the influence of unkindly criticism on others, but it is equally hurtful to the person who indulges it. Too keen an eye for small blemishes must rob one of much true help and pleasure. I never envy people who invariably balance a description of character with a "but," and then make you cognizant of some flaw in temper or manner which spoils the whole. I mean, of course, if they do this gratuitously, when there is no strong reason for the revelation. And, turning from criticism of persons, how many tiny springs of most pure delight are troubled, if not dried, by the spirit of depreciation: by not taking the good we have

and rejoicing in it; not enjoying small pleasures simply and thankfully! You take two visitors, for instance, for a drive. You know your home scenery is nothing remarkable, but it has its own beauty, and you have learned to love it. One "wonders you can live in such a dismal neighbourhood: not the sign of a hill to be seen, and no wood worth speaking of." The other delights in the wide expanse of sky, or points out to you how the red poppies mingle with the green of growing wheat, while the blue corn-flowers wait till the golden tints are come. You recognize the true poetic gift of finding beauty everywhere; the loving, childlike heart which, satisfied to glean among bare fields, finds there a harvest of wonder and gladness. And you are helped to put down your yearning for the hills you remember, and look round your flat horizon-line with content.

"Give true hearts but earth and sky
And some flowers to bloom and die,—
Homely thoughts and simple views
Lowly thoughts may best infuse."

But your other friend has missed pleasure for himself, and by no means added to yours.

Ruskin says, somewhere, that the "temper of which true taste is formed is characteristically patient. It dwells upon what is submitted to it. It does not

trample upon it, lest it should be pearls, even though it looks like husks." And the remark applies, like all truth, to small things as well as great. There is room and need for this wise and tolerant patience in the narrow round of home, as well as in the wider sphere outside. We women, at any rate, do not greatly need it anywhere else, but it will help us, "within bounds." To sympathize with what is imperfect, to catch the idea which struggles through broken expression whether of word or deed, to estimate at its true value the nature which lies deeper than speech, and, instead of repressing, to find for it, or help it to find for itself, some outlet for free development,—this seems to me one of the noblest parts of woman's ministry. We have need in it of the "quiet wisdom which cometh from the Lord," and no less of the charity which "believeth and hopeth all things." This, our Lord's own spirit of love, caught as it can only be from Himself, is our true safeguard against a habit of fault-finding.

I suppose one is more prone to this latter in early years than later. It may proceed partly from what is not in itself wrong. Our standard is high in youth, and we are impatient, both in ourselves and others, of whatever falls short of it. It seems a sort of injury that anyone should give us less than the best. But through the bitterness of many failures

we are taught toleration. Our own "best" lies far beyond our grasp. We look towards it very humbly for ourselves, and in others we learn to bear with imperfection which we cannot help observing. We are tender over it, with almost reverent tenderness. Have not our hearts grown sick with yearning after an ideal we have never realized? Why should we add, by even a word, to the hopelessness of that same yearning in another?

After all the art of admiration is much more rare than that of criticism, being always more or less difficult, especially for little minds and narrow hearts. There are not many whose sight is so much absorbed in all that is high and pure and noble, that, if it is compelled to see defects, it cannot long rest on them.

“ AGNES.”

YOU wonder that Agnes Lytton should suit me as a friend, “we are so unlike.” But, my dear Mary, what does one need in a friend? Surely not a reflection or repetition of oneself! Do you not get enough of that personage? I do: I want no more.

I am to “make you know her,” you say. No: I cannot. You would never know one another, you two, if you lived together for a year. I can paint her for you, in dim outline, with a dash of colour here and there, and your remembrance of her home may help you to frame the picture. But I can bring her no nearer to you than that.

You know the Rectory here,—an old house of thoroughly comfortable English type—added to, and embellished at different times and in various ways, till it has reached the perfection of home-like beauty and pleasantness. I wonder, by the way, wherein that pleasantness consists. Not, I think, in any

tangible "this" or "that," so much as in the pureness and loveliness which the very walls have drunk in through years of quiet family story,—years that have flowed on in the everyday current of a common living,—or been broken by spaces in which hearts have beat fast with joy or pain. They settle down again afterwards into peace, wherein comes the growing and ripening of seed sown when they were deeply stirred.

For Agnes, the ripening time is now. Years ago, when we first knew one another, no one dreamed that at thirty-five she would still be the rectory child. Ah, it is not death only which lies between lives which touched and blessed one another once, and perhaps in some mysterious fashion are touching and blessing still, though one seems to have wandered into darkness and the other is left waiting in a world whose meaning is all changed, if not confused,—waiting only for a hope whose blossoming is not here. But there is no dreariness in the waiting, and no restlessness,—nothing but the calmness of full content, which can "patiently abide away," because it knows that, though the past may have broken its promise, the future will keep it sevenfold.

Yes: she is very happy. Look at her, as she sits there by the window, the light falling softly on her calm fair face, and you cannot doubt it, though you

may wonder,—for there seems little in her outward lot to make her so. She is left alone of the band of brothers and sisters who once made the old house ring. Her mother is a constant invalid: her father silent and grave. There is little society in the place, and not much work that need necessarily be done; for the parish is small, and the most scrupulous attention to the schools and the poor leave a wide margin after their claims are satisfied. Some women, perhaps, would make their lives tell upon a wider circle, but Agnes never dreams of that. The home-sphere, with its narrowness and peace, is all she asks for. Watch her fingers as they move at her work—what is it? some “tacking” to help the school-mistress—there is something in their steady sustained motion which tells of being satisfied; even if you could not read the same tale in the rested curve of her lips, and the stillness of her dear brown eyes. She is not pretty, but you turn to look at her again and again as on a pleasant picture, full of sweetness and harmony.

“But I don’t like your picture,” I think I hear you say, “its altogether too still for me: I want more force and fire. I never care for women who sit by the window and sew. Your Agnes is wasting her life: why doesn’t she do something with it?”

I think there are few in L—— who would not

tell you that "Miss Agnes" does a good deal with her life, and most certainly the blessing of it falls in her own home like dew and sunshine. Does that seem little to you? I don't think Agnes would be much disturbed by your judgment. She knows that her lot is "appointed," and that what to her or us may seem like limitations are not really such. A life like Mrs. M——'s would be easier by far, which, beside its hard work, is full of change and excitement; the demands on nerve and brain being partly supplied by the stimulus of constant interest. Take Mrs. M—— away from her "Refuges" and put her in a quiet village like L——, and she would find its monotony more trying than the weariness of a London winter.

Do you remember Mrs. B—— once pointing out to us that remarkable expression in Luke xii.: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God," which gives us a glimpse of something we know very little about at present. She said it seemed as if God gathered into His storehouse, from each of our lives, all that is pleasing to Himself,—fruit in which He delights. And the daily cross-bearings and self-denials, the bright word spoken when head and heart are weary, the meek endurance of misunderstanding, the steady going on in one unbroken round, with a patient cheerfulness

that knows nothing of "moods,"—all these are garnered there, and add to our riches towards Him; riches which shall be manifested in "that day." And it may be that from the lives which have few outlets except towards God, there will be at last the fullest harvest. A woman's life especially may surely be a ministry of blessing, though she never leaves her home at all, for is it not her first duty to be a "keeper" there? God indeed calls some out as distinctly as He bids others stay; but we should be very sure of the call, and not believe too hastily that we have heard it.

No, my Agnes's days are not wasted: I cannot let you think so. For herself, she is not troubled on the point at all, not being one of the introspective women who are always looking at themselves from the outside. She is content to live her life without analysing it; content, as the Catechism says, "to do her duty in that state unto which it hath pleased God to call her." There could be no nobler history for any human being.

Besides, even granting that, according to your estimate, she is "doing nothing" now, does it follow that her lot is never to change? Alas, when I look at Mr. Lytton's silver hair and note his failing step, I know the day is not far distant when the barriers about her will be broken, and she will be left lonely

in her freedom. Meanwhile, do you not believe that the intervals in our lives have their meaning? There is no music in a rest, but it has its own place in the melody. And I think a space is often given us between youth, with its pain and hope its eagerness and longing, and what may unfold from these in the riper years that are to follow.

Which space, by-the-bye, need be by no means an empty one. St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians and Colossians of being "rooted and grounded in love—rooted and built up in Christ." All this implies something which is deep within,—a hidden work, not shown to the outward eye. It is the work of days and years in their slow teaching—the work of all those silent influences which are brought by God's Spirit to bear upon the soul, like change of summer heat and winter storm. There are often times when we feel as if the work of God stood still within us, when outward circumstances seem to restrain it, our discipline being apparently one of repression rather than of fostering development. And we murmur and are restless, because we see the fair fruit in other lives, and in our own there is only the yearning towards it, hardly even the blossom. But God is strengthening the roots of faith: its bloom and fruitage will come hereafter. He is teaching it to strike down to the Rock and

firm hold there, to feel the strength of the love and power which sustains it, to rest in conscious living nearness on Jesus Himself. He is teaching it to penetrate to the "rivers of waters," to drink deep of the only source of true growth. And all these are lessons mostly learned in "spaces," wherein our own patience often fails, and we feel as if time were lost; lessons whose results are not immediate, but gathered only after waiting; some, it may be, never gathered here at all.

CHRISTIANITY.

Is it not strange, you ask me, that you should feel so lonely when you are "among Christians"?

Alas, no! From your description of your friends, it does not seem to me strange at all. I think it would be if you felt anything else,—both strange and sad. For, though they may have been truly converted to God, and are thus numbered among Christians "not nominal," yet, if they have rested in this first stage, while you, in desire at least, have passed beyond it,—it cannot be but that between you and them must be difference enough to account for some uncongeniality. Conversion places us (how shall I define it?) instrumentally, in a state of salvation from God's wrath and from sin's penalty. But though to be saved is our first and great necessity, is it indeed the "prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus"? Is not this rather, not only to be ourselves "in Christ"—but, through the daily dying of the old man, to have Christ formed in us—"to be renewed

after His image"—to have His life penetrating ours and displacing it? To this conversion is the gate, but no more. And yet too many are content with having entered the gate without pressing on in the path to which it leads. They have life, and they are careless of growth. They are satisfied to be *safe*, and they forget that safety is only the beginning and not the end. They say rightly, that they cannot be saved through their own efforts, but they forget that, *being saved*, they must strive.

Hence we see so many who bear Christ's name removed, by painful distance, from self-sacrificing world-renouncing Christianity, in His spirit and after His example. Hence the prevalence of religious selfishness and sentimentality, and the mixture, sad as it is unholy, of religion and the world. Hence also, too often, religion without moral principle.

You think these are hard words? They seem not only hard, but presumptuous and proud. "Who art thou that judgest another?"

But you know well that nothing is more humbling than to have before you a standard which you do not reach. I see what it is to be a Christian: I cannot compare my own life with my ideal, without bitterest mortification. But still, *I do see it*—and so do you. Consequently our point of view is different from that of many around us, on whom this light

has never dawned, even to "reprove" and "make manifest." Hence the loneliness of being with them. I have never felt more solitary among those who do not profess to care for Christ at all, than with those who love Him, and yet do not realize what the love binds them to. We may fall short of our goal, but it is *in sight*; and the very looking towards it separates us from those whose eyes never turn to it. We measure everything differently. It is like, as some one remarks, "living by the dial while others go by the clock." Things which others do, amusements, in which they join, we stand aloof from. We do not judge them, but for ourselves there is no hesitation: we cannot take our Lord's time and spend it so. We are His—His only—having no ownership in ourselves, or in anything which we possess. And from this entire surrender springs willingness to be identified with Christ. As He was in the world, so are we ready to be,—outside of it, taking His place of rejection and dishonour. It is hardly a cross to us to be there, when we are living in the strength of this entire oneness with our Lord. And we are not troubled with many questionings. It is our place to be *with Him*, and the strong yearning of love cuts a way for us through difficulties we cannot reason about. When others wonder and exclaim, and protest against "extremes,"

we only answer that we are "not careful to answer." We cannot explain, and we are in no haste to justify. We lay down no rules for our neighbour. We may say, like Abraham of old, "I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet (Gen. xiv. 23, 24); but, for the young men, *let them take their portion.*" Yet, at the same time, we ask nothing about rules for ourselves. The only question for us is—How would Christ act? He, the living Lord, is more to us than maxims and directions.


And that thought brings help in this very trial of loneliness. It is hard to bear, especially when it first sets in, and we are just beginning to feel that we, and some who have been so far very near, must henceforth tread paths separate though not diverging. But Christ Himself has borne this cross of standing apart even from the so-called "religious world." Does not He know how hard and sharp its burden must often be? Does not He understand how our hearts must ache for the old nearness and sympathy once so sweet? Surely He does. If He calls us to be for Him alone and not for another, He does not forget that His voice must silence other voices, and that we must miss their speech. But His pleading is the same still: "Lovest thou Me more than these?" And His answer is the same to *our* pleading: "Am I not better to thee than ten, even of thy heart's chosen?"

He teaches us, too, how to deal with those who do not yet see as we see. We are tempted to be very impatient of their *not* seeing. We tell them what our Lord has shown to us, and we wonder, if we are not angry, that they do not perceive it. We are slow to learn that God alone "teaches to profit." Only the words which He Himself speaks are "spirit and life." All others fall powerless. I think He means us always to witness for the truth He has taught ourselves, but we are not to be dismayed, still less irritated, if the witness is unheeded. Let us remember His patience with those who were "slow of heart," and did "not yet understand." How wisely He led them on, step by step, as they were "able to bear it"—never taking them further or faster than they could follow. It is the same still. The lessons, as well as the fruit-bearing, of His children, have their season. They follow in the order He chooses, and we cannot anticipate them for one another, or say, "You shall learn this now: leave that alone for the present." Very often, I think, He brings His people together just when "one that loves, but knows not," is ready to reap "a truth from one that loves and knows." But if the time has not yet come, we must be content to wait. We may sow, but "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," and His working, first and last, is when and as He will.

Perhaps, too, God's deepest teaching cannot be received at once. For each life it is hidden in His hand, and bestowed gradually, as we need it. One human being cannot *give* it to another.

One needs faith here, however, and patience—for both are tried. I sometimes think it is easier to feel sure of blessing for the unconverted, than for Christians who are "following afar off." For them, prayer and effort seem sometimes paralysed. Yet why should we limit, even here, the "exceeding greatness" of our Lord's power? He has already spoken the word of awaking—bidden them come forth from spiritual death. And can He not speak the word of freedom: "Loose him and let him go"? He has already given life—can He not give it "more abundantly"?

“FOR THEE.”

NE thought in your letter I must notice. It is true and right in itself, and yet it may lead to what is both untrue and wrong.

“When I think of other sorrows, so much greater than mine, this little trouble seems not worth speaking of. I ought not to feel it: but I do.”

Yes, you do, and God knows you must. By all means let us look at the crosses of others, and give Him thanks that our own are lighter; but they have their special weight, and we need not charge it as a sin on our conscience if, under their pressure, we “groan, being burdened.” Does not God measure trial by *what it is to us*? Surely He does,—is not that part of the “confidence we have in Him”? Does not this alone bring the unutterable sense of rest in which we lean our hearts against Him—knowing that He has made the very spirit we are of, and can gauge the hidden depths of it, and see the wounds kept from our nearest and dearest,—the

trials that are felt only and cannot be put into words? A *thing* is not a trial in the abstract, any more than a note on the piano is an unchanging tone. All depends on its relation to other things, other notes in the scale, through which comes the tender harmony or the frightful discord. It is the realization of this that makes the Lord Almighty, "*My God, my Father,*" the Father of our spirits.

There is untold relief in turning from the human to the Divine. You go to a friend with something that troubles you; and you hear, perhaps, of some crushing calamity which makes you hold your breath in shocked pity. You cannot speak of your "little trouble" after that, but no more can you get outside the shadow of it. And yet the shadow is invisible to everyone but yourself. You do not wear mourning, though life looks to you all grey and black. And you do not take a nervous fever: you only go through every day with each nerve throbbing in its own misery. But you can look to your elder brother. He, who judges "with other eyes than ours" can see that one with whom many are sympathizing, is bearing no more than you—possibly not so much. He has special tenderness for your need, and entire understanding of it. He does not reproach you because you feel what another might perhaps not feel at all. It is not some one else's trial, but yours,—and if it

brought no soreness of heart, neither could it bring healing.

Those words of Christ to St. Paul hold within them depths of comfort: "My grace is sufficient for thee." *For thee*: Paul's whole self, physical, mental, spiritual, was included in the words. The secret of the "thorn in the flesh" lay between him and his Lord. To St. Peter it might not have been a "thorn" at all. If it had been "sent" to him, his different organization would have shielded him from its sharpness: he would have worked on and never felt it. But, for St. Paul, its keen agony was always present: he could not live it down. And so the promise was of grace sufficient "*for thee*." It was not the need of Peter or James which His Lord promised to meet, but of himself,—a very different person. And, for you and me to-day, there is the same individual knowledge—the same individual help. You need not put away from you the comfort God sends, because you think I need it more. There is enough for us both in our Father's treasury; and there is a portion belonging to each, "*for thee*," and "*for thee*"—with which neither may intermeddle for the other.

And this reminds me, I scarcely know why, of that first verse of Psalm cxvi., which always seems to me peculiarly sweet: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication." There is a

sort of *personality* in this utterance of David's love for his Lord: "because He hath heard the voice of *my* supplication." It refers to something out of sight,—a secret between his soul and God. The longer we follow Christ, the more we understand this. We love Him in early days, as indeed we must always do, because of His own infinite love in bringing us up from the "horrible pit and the miry clay."

Yet *here* our love has common ground with that of all His children. But there have been days when our cry has gone up to God, and He alone has heard it—days when the very blackness of darkness was about us, and yet we went through them with calm faces, and none knew that for us the grave was closing over all we cared to live for;—days, too, when Satan's power seemed let loose upon us, and we wrestled in deadly conflict, which God only and His angels watched; when, perhaps, we spoke of His love as men speak of something they once knew but which has passed away from them for ever, its very possession now like a dream and a delusion. And from all these desert places where we walked alone and none knew it, because we seemed to walk with others, as ever our cry has gone up to Him and we can recall how He came to us in the wilderness, and made it glad, we can look back now and see

them studded with Ebenezers, which none saw us raise, and of which none can read the meaning. But as *our* eyes rest upon them and count them up as treasures, even for eternity, we can say, Oh, how joyfully! "I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication."

ASSOCIATIONS.

SOMETIMES think that sounds and scents have most power to touch the wondrous subtle springs of our inner world. In the street, just now, a passing breeze brought me the scent of musk. It stirred memories that sleep, but never die,—of letters perfumed with it—letters which never cross now the gulf which lies between two lives.

A little further on I heard a barrel-organ playing a sacred air. Now I have a great objection to barrel-organs, and think the liberty of the subject might be advantageously interfered with, in respect of their being put down. Especially I dislike their grinding out "The Portuguese Hymn," or "The Old Hundredth," in juxta-position with "Pop goes the Weasel," or "Lily Dale." But I could have found in my heart to give the organ-man a penny for the picture he brought just then to my mental vision—nay, it was worth to me what gold could not have bought—our little church at W——. Ugly enough.

you will tell me: never mind, I loved it, and it suited the old-world village perfectly. I was sitting again at the end of our parsonage pew, close by the dear surplised figure in the desk, looking through the half-open door to the line of trees beyond the green. I watched the people drop in one by one—homely folk from the country side, farmers whose very walk showed self-respect and honest purpose,—their faces, somewhat stolid perhaps, marked by kindliness and shrewd sense, and lighted now and then by gleams of humour, quaint and keen, if it might be slow. Then their wives, whose best bonnets had been laid up in lavender for many a year, and their daughters, whose head-dresses, of the newest market-town fashion, were not half so becoming, and the shy heavy lads, whose stalwart frames so generally required the support of the pew-back to keep them upright. It was not a cultured congregation—but each man, woman, and child had a sort of ownership in the rest; and the thrill of kindly feeling ran from seat to seat. And this tune,—it was generally sung at the beginning of the service to that grand old hymn,

“Lord of the Sabbath, hear us pray.”

And I remember how its stately pathetic cadence touched one's heart with an indefinable yearning,

lifted one on and up to the "nobler rest above," of which our quiet country Sundays were almost a foretaste. The barrel-organ took me back to them, over all the years which lay between. I could almost hear the click of the church gate as some one came in late,—almost feel the soft west wind as it crept up the aisle and stirred the leaves of my book.

I suppose, after all, that we never lose an impression once received. It may be covered over, but it cannot be effaced. And some very slight thing, as little to be calculated on as the breeze which lifts one mass of leaves after another to let the light shine through, will throw a gleam on it, we know not how, and show its traces cut deep. Perhaps hereafter we shall be able to go back at will to all we have forgotten,—back to the dim beginnings which lie beyond us now—those first faint dawnings of an inner consciousness which we sometimes struggle hopelessly to recall.

And in this sense it is true not only that nothing we ever had can be entirely taken from us, but that we "have" many things which seem to have been denied. Of all beauty we have seen, perhaps longed for, the subtle essence remains with us. And so a life that is spent amidst the most homely surroundings may possess treasures of fairness and delight which the outside world would never guess. What

is not there may be put in, and held fast as real wealth, which can neither be touched nor spoiled. God's giving can multiply the five barley loaves in this way as in many another. Even the stillest, narrowest days have many outgoings, *for those who use them*, into the wide world beyond. A glimpse, the faintest shadow of a hint, is enough to take us there if we will go. A handful of leaves or grasses will bring us all the freshness of spring, with the wind blowing over the violets. So it comes,—the memory of all that has been gathered into life, here and there, as we have passed through it,—comes, we know not how or whence, wakening us with a spirit-touch, to realize all imaginings and remembrances,—what has been and always must be.

CHRIST OUR KING.

I WAS reading to-day that wonderful account of the Adoration of the Magi, on which Christian love lingers with not less reverence than Christian art. It teaches a different lesson from the Adoration of the Shepherds—one which we are a little apt to pass over. The leading of the star is in itself remarkable, as vouchsafed to those who were worshippers of the heavenly bodies. Does it not show how God meets each soul, as it were, on its own ground? To the woman at the well of Sychar, Christ spoke of “living water.” To the fishermen of Galilee, He promised that they should become fishers of men.

The Magi sought Christ as a King, and, when they had found, worshipped Him with gifts. Our recognition of Him as such, is not, I think, a very early stage in the Christian life. God’s infinite mercy has made it no hard thing for us to obtain salvation from His wrath and from the punishment of sin. “He that believeth,” “Him that is athirst,”

—these are its conditions. We are justified “freely by His grace.” Our pardon is no purchase: we give nothing for it,—we have nothing to give. So the shepherds of Bethlehem had but a short way to go from the fields where they heard the angel’s message, till they found in the city of David the Saviour born. They came to Him empty-handed: they left Him, doubtless, rejoicing.

But even when we have thus found Christ the Saviour, it is an entirely different thing to recognize Him as our King, and therefore to bring every thought into captivity to His obedience,—to realize His claim, always and everywhere, to our allegiance. Is not this second stage, if I may so call it, of Christian progress, shadowed out in the Adoration of the Magi? They, as well as the shepherds, came to Christ at Bethlehem; but, to reach Him, they must leave home and country, and traverse the dreary desert of Arabia. They must bring with them gifts, as fitting offerings,—gold and frankincense and myrrh. From us also Christ the Saviour asks nothing. His salvation is without money and without price. But Christ the Ruler bids us deny self; bids us leave all and take up the cross; bids us yield in sacrifice what we hold most precious.

And so we find that they who long to know Christ thus,—who seek not their own will, but only to know

His that they may do it,—have to come, like the wise men, from a far country. They have received all: now they would yield all. Even friends, once dearest, and in love dearest still, must give place to their King. They can have no communion of heart with any who do not hold the interest of His kingdom first. They turn aside, not in narrowness, still less in asceticism, but in simple distaste, from much which they once cared for. They ask now, not as formerly, “*May* I do this or that? Has God forbidden it?” but, “Will it be for my King’s glory?” And on all their time, on all their strength, on every power of mind and body, is set this seal, the stamp of His ownership: “The Lord hath need of it.”

Yet how few of us recognize Jesus thus—King as well as Redeemer! He has given us the joy of His salvation, and in its unutterable peace our hearts are content; as a little child, held fast in its father’s arms, is satisfied in being so held, and asks for nothing more. And this is deep blessedness. There is a sense in which we want nothing more on this side heaven.

But we are not to be always babes in Christ. We are to grow up to the stature of the perfect man, and with the developed powers of manhood come its duties and its allegiance. Hence, I think, we reach a sort of crisis in our Christian life; when from

or rather after the joyous following of children, we hear our Lord's call to the sterner following of discipleship. (Luke xiv. 26.) "He cannot be *my disciple*." He does not say, "He cannot be saved ;" but, "He cannot be my disciple,"—he cannot share my mind. And the "mind that was in Him" was surely of sacrifice.

Do you remember how, years ago, Mrs. B—— pointed out to us one lesson of that sweetest idyll, the story of Ruth? She first knew her mother-in-law as Naomi,—“the pleasant one;” but afterwards as Marah,—“bitterness.” Yet her heart was true, even to the end. Are ours true to our Beloved, when His words, “If any man serve Me let him follow Me,” call us to surrender—call us to a path which is separate and lonely, one which even fellow-Christians wonder at, and think we tread needlessly, because it is not theirs? Do we look up to Him even then as our King, whose command we are to follow only, never to question? Then for us, as for Ruth, the bitterness will end in joy. In proportion to our faithful obedience to His rule here, will be our reward “in the regeneration,” when they who have suffered with Him will also reign.

CHRIST OUR KING: WHAT HE WILL
DO FOR US.

YOU point out to me one most important consequence of Christ as King. I had not before thought of connecting it with the petition in His own prayer: "Thy kingdom come." We need to have that prayer fulfilled first in our own hearts, and you give me an answer to many almost hopeless longings in the simple reminder that, if the kingdom be His, He has power to set it up. From us He asks nothing but trust and obedience, for He is the "Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." There is no question here of justification; for, with this, obedience has surely nothing to do. But by His own obedience unto death, by His "learning obedience through the things which He suffered," He has wrought for us freedom from the power of the creature will. He has not only atoned for our sins by His voluntary sacrificial death, but, by the perfect subjection of His own human will to that of the Father, He has wrought for us present deliverance from sin—

not from its indwelling, but from its dominion, far beyond what most of us have dreamed of. We should be very careful how we undervalue this His kingly power. Those are solemn words in the seventy-eighth Psalm: "They *limited* the Holy One of Israel." How did they limit Him? Was it not by distrusting His power to give them victory over His enemies and theirs? Just as we limit Him. Just as, when we see in the Bible a path of holiness such as we have never reached, we are apt to say, "Oh, but I could not walk there: it is too high for me! If I got upon it I could not stay. Besides, I do not think Christians are meant to walk in it." And so we try to bring the Bible standard down to our experience, instead of trusting the power of Christ to bring our experience up to the standard. We want more of the strong faith of David's words: "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." (Psa. xviii. 33—36.) The faith is strong because the self-distrust is absolute. It is always, "*He* maketh, *He* teacheth."


"Oh, there are heavenly heights to reach
In many a fearful place,
Where the poor timid heir of God
Lies blindly on his face,—

Lies languishing for life divine,
That he shall never see
Till he go forward, at Thy sign,
And trust himself to Thee."

Yes: "trust himself to Thee." We know what is the will of our King for each one in His kingdom: "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love"—"perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Those words mean something: they are not mere figures of speech. God never sets before us an unattainable standard. No: but here is the secret: "trust himself to Thee." We know the will of our King: let us rest in His power also. Let us only ask, when some besetting sin is to be overcome, some progress in holiness gained, "*Is Jesus able?*" And then let us test His sufficiency,—test it, not doubtfully, not as if we were making an experiment which might fail,—but simply, fully. I believe the whole secret of victory lies here,—in looking, not to ourselves, for in us is nothing which can conquer, but straight up to our King. What are our enemies to Him? What limit can there be to the power of His might working through us—through our very death? So, when temptation arises, let us not even try to meet it, but in a moment throw ourselves helplessly back on Christ, sending up the cry of the heart, "Lord fight for me now,—Lord, undertake for

me now." We cannot tell how He will do it. Sometimes it may be by turning the battle aside altogether—sometimes by so covering us with the shield of His love, that we lose sight of everything else. But, in one way or other, He will do it. Let us only trust Him, and He will show us how.

WHAT LIFE MAY BE.

ND so you wish you could drink Lethe? Be thankful you cannot, for the draught is poisoned. Of all myths of antiquity, that seems to me the most thoroughly Pagan—not un-Christian only, but anti-Christian; opposed to all teaching from holiest lips about the sweet uses of adversity and the peaceable fruits of chastening.

No, we cannot afford to throw away our past.

“They are poor
Who have lost nothing. They most poor
Of all, who lose and wish they might forget.”

You tell me life can never again be to you what it has been. No: but it will be what it never could have been,—sadder, perhaps, but wider and deeper as well. And the time will come, not soon, but surely, when you will give God thanks that it is what He has made it. He has laid a gift in your hands with this sorrow, whose value you know not now, but you will hereafter,—even on earth.

A gift! Nay, but, you will say, "He has added nothing: rather He has taken away all." Not all,—not indeed anything which was really needful. He never spoils our lives for us—never leaves them crushed and empty,—at least if they are so, it is by our own choice, not His. For the fulness in Himself, of strength and rest and peace, may be ours if we will. He may not give us what we have stretched out our hands for, in the wild yearning that knew not what it sought, but something falls into them that meets our true want as well, or better.

You cannot take the comfort of this at present. We do not suffer and rejoice at the same moment, nor, while fighting, do we gather the fruit of victory. Others may watch the battle and understand the meaning of it, but we only learn it afterwards, when we have come out with wounds that are noblest trophies. For the present there is only a blind struggle of passion and pain,—no more. But looking back, after it is over, we can see for others what we once could not realize for ourselves; and therefore I have one thing to say to you which, though you will not believe it, is nevertheless true,—that in time the bitterness of the grief will pass. You feel, now, as if this *could* not be. In ten years, or less, you will know that *it is*. Thousands, who have suffered as you suffer, will tell you the same. How else could

life be borne at all? God's own hand will put a veil between you and your past. Its outlines will reach you through the mist of memory,—touched with softness, if not with beauty. They will throw no shadow on your present, or only one of calm. Remember again, remember always, that your life is not a mere spoiled life, which you have just to live on and live out. It seems empty now, but, if you can believe and wait, it will bring you still enough and to spare. You have seen a thing that "might have been"—a glimpse just shown you, and withdrawn. But all the rest is left,—and God.

And there are many brightening influences, after all, stirring our sensitive inner consciousness in some subtle fashion which we cannot explain. They may not reach, and could not heal if they did, the one sore spot in our hearts; but they play around and soothe its aching, like the breath of a wind that tells of summer. We may shut them out. Many do; and their hearts grow dry and wither. It is a sure retribution for refusing any gift of God, whether cross or simple joy. But, if we take it as He sends, who is over all and in all, we shall often find that we have entertained angels unawares.

Of course there is the inevitable loneliness of an unattached life; but of this, as of many other things, the reality is far less dreadful than the seeming. At

least I have heard many women say so, whose social instincts are as strong as yours or mine. Nay, they have felt that only through the thwarting of these instincts has life become possible. For them the "attaching" would have been so close, would have brought such intensity of love and care, that the strain of it could hardly have been borne. And such have even come to love their solitude, and find its strengthening rest essential to repair the waste of hours spent in the service of others. Even that most desolate "coming home and having no one to speak to" may be a lightening as well as a loss, when brain and voice are tired. If one by the fire-side need cheering, we must make the effort to cheer,—or, if it is too great, we must give up what makes it hard. But, alone, we may look into the blaze and think. The soul may turn inward upon its hidden springs of power, and draw wherewith to renew the force which has ebbed away. And the next claim will find us ready to meet it, calm and wise and strong,—not in ourselves, but in Him at whose feet we have "rested awhile."

"But there you are setting the single state above the married!" How could I, when I believe that what God Himself has chosen as a type of the union between Christ and His Church, must ever be the crown and flower of this our human life. No:

but, as to the individual, His choice for each must be the highest *for that one soul*. He knows His own purpose for it, and we, who see through a glass darkly and cannot follow the deep channels of His grace, must be content that He should work it out by means which His wisdom fits to their end. Not what is best in the abstract, but what is best for you and me, is the only question with which we are personally concerned, and as we cannot answer it for ourselves, we may well be content to take the answer from Him. "The Master calleth thee!"—is not that enough for the disciple? To do what He bids,—that is life in its true meaning, here or hereafter.

"Ah," you will tell me, "many can look at the loneliness and never fear it, with strong health and limitless powers of locomotion, able to go out and bring plenty of interest back. But think of illness, with its silent helpless hours; think of being dependent on hands not kindred, whose very touch irritates, and whose soothing you must pay for."

Ah, I think of it, and I know how the thought brings unutterable pain. All I can say is,—Leave it with your Lord. You have nothing to do with it at present but to throw it off, and you cannot even do that unless you know where to lay it. Yet even then it will cling to you, and your only help is to

cry, "Lord, take it from me: deliver me from this my fear." One word of His rebukes it: "No good thing shall He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If no tenderness of child or sister may minister to your need, He will lay it on other hearts in the household of faith, and care for you Himself through these. One thing you know: He will not leave you desolate, any more than He left the prophet by the brook. He has messengers enough to send on errands of help for His children, and He knows where to find and how to use them. Do you think your hour of need can come without His remembrance of it? And if He remembers, He will meet it,—how, you cannot tell, but when you say "Our Father," you leave that with Him. Remember our prayer is for "*daily bread*," and there is such a thing as missing the answer, while we try to grasp some "bread" in the future which we think may fail us. We shall find it there when we go forward and meet the want of it, but we must wait till then.

And there is something to wait for always! Not what we have dreamed, or even ever caught sight of, —rather that which may come by the way of losing all this. Yet something lying now under the horizon of our lives, yet still coming, here or *there*. And let us remember that while we wait, it may be in painful "missing" which seems so dreary, some one

else has, even now, the joy which for us only might have been. Other eyes watch the beauty which is shut from ours. Other lips are singing the song we only hear afar. Let us learn to be glad in this better thing, though we may but stand aside and see it pass. We think we have only half what life should have brought us, while some one else has the other half, and we must go on always with the sense of loss,—the yearning without the answer. But there is the whole beyond : beyond the waiting, and behind it.

But all this which I have said has been *only* saying, —nothing more. I cannot teach it you. We must learn, each for ourselves, by no forcing, but by gradual need and following and gentle answering. We cannot begin with another at the same beginning which has unfolded itself to us.

ST. PETER.

I AM to give you some thoughts for your Bible-class lesson on the character of St. Peter. I send what I can,—very fragmentary, and by no means original. I gathered them myself, from various sources, for the same purpose,—sources which any student can trace, so I will not trouble you by always acknowledging them. Much I must leave untouched. A life of St. Peter, with all it suggests, might fill a volume.

There is great help and teaching in studying the characteristics of the Apostles. We shall surely understand better what they say, in proportion as we realize to ourselves what manner of men they were who speak. And, more than this, there is a deep lesson in their differences. For we see how God, in His wondrous plan, had room and need for each, and how we surely ought so to widen our Christian sympathy, as to embrace within it views and tempers and thoughts diverse from each other and from our own.

It must be in the early stage of St. Peter's life that we look for the leading idea of his character. There was progress in it indeed, but there was, as some one says, "no great and abrupt change from his former self, as in St. Paul,—no wide chasm of which we know nothing, as in St. John. What he was when we first knew him,—the same man, softened, strengthened, sanctified,—he was down to the end."

Thus St. Luke's account of his call to the Apostleship gives the key to much which followed ;—one of the picture bits of the Gospel story which stand out in vivid colouring, so fair and clear that again and again we turn to study it with ever deepening delight. It is not the story of his first acquaintance with Christ, for this is given by that other Galilean fisherman with whom his life is closely linked,—how he was "found" by his brother Andrew and brought to Jesus, to receive at once the new name which meant so much. This one interview at least there was between the disciple and the Master, and then came a silent space, in which thought was doubtless busy, while days and nights were full of homely toil. For impulse must be tested and deepened : the new life in the soul must take root downward, before it can bear fruit upward. There are stages in the Christian life, with intervals unmarked by distinct experience,—growing times, never-

theless. Yet we can lay down no rules here. Some the Master moulds into His own image, like St. Paul, in an instant; others, like St. Peter, require the slow elaboration of years,—influence on influence, stroke on stroke.

But still it is one thing for any soul to receive *for itself* the revelation of a Redeemer, and quite another for it to realize His call to become a “fisher” of the souls of others. Any who are converted at all know the first: few, because few are willing, know the second. The call is given indeed, but, in our sloth and self-indulgence, we fail to obey: it is enough that we are safe. We know nothing of the constraining love which leads the Lamb’s chosen bride to follow Him whithersoever He goeth,—even to “gather in those who are scattered abroad.” For it is love which has not grown in easy days; it has received a costly discipline, which I think this scene of St. Peter’s story shadows forth.

By disappointment first:

“The live-long night they toiled in vain.”

Faith must fail that it might grow. Weakness must fail that strength might come in its place. The seed must die that it might live.

Then comes the testing of obedience. “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.”

It was a hard command. They had taken nothing through the night: should they be successful in the morning light? The experience of a lifetime said, No. But Peter sets that aside for Christ's word. Thus God's servant of old, looking on the valley of "dry bones," questioning nothing of improbabilities, simply doing as he was told: "So I prophesied as I was commanded." (Ezek. xxxvi. 7.) And none gain victories of faith till they have caught the spirit of Mary's words: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it;"—till they say unhesitatingly, as Peter said, *Master*. As Saviour we knew Him first; as Saviour we must cleave to Him all through. But not until we own Him as Master shall we enter into true rest, or be ready for true service; for till then self, with its "I cannot, I dare not, I will not," will dispute His rule: self, to which the launching out into the deep seems only waste of strength. And thus the net will not be let down, nor the blessing found.

There was discipline for faith too: it must learn to cling to the bare command, "*at Thy word*;" for it is always this naked trust which God honours. Look at any of the men whose work in the world He has signally blessed. Perhaps, they have not been men of subtle or comprehensive thought, or even of very fervent love, but they have taken Him at His word and acted on it. They have dared to

make ventures, hardly realizing, perhaps, that they were ventures, so unhesitating has been their reliance on His pledge of help. They may not have reflected much, or calculated, but they have done nobly. Enthusiasts, men have called them, as they watched the net let down, but they have been thankful to share its treasures when it was dragged full to the shore. And what God calls them, Himself has told us: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

There is a touch of Peter's impulsiveness here, Luke v. 8: "When he saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh, Lord!"

But the depths were stirred: it was no time for measured word or step. The power of God was upon his soul. He caught a glimpse of the veiled glory, and in its light he saw, himself. The nearer to God, the clearer our sight of our own vileness: "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job. xlii. 6.) It was another preparation for service: the deepening of humility.

And this is the initiation, so to speak,—not a form, but a deep reality which all must undergo who are to stand foremost in the kingdom. The outward circumstances of it may differ, but the essence and

aim are ever the same; for to each one it is a supernatural revelation, as much as to Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Peter,—a vision bright and confounding, disclosing the blackness and the vileness within; leaving him, when its terror is past, to rise from the dust of self-abasement, lost in wonder at the mercy which forgives and restores and condescends to use him still.

“But, though Peter falls before the glory, he does not go away from it. The accuser in John viii. retires from the conviction, but Peter the convicted falls before Him who had convicted him, and accordingly, the next moment, the glory which had overwhelmed him, comforts him.”

“Fear not,”—it was a tender reassuring word: “from henceforth thou shalt catch men;” literally, *take them alive* from the element of death to life eternal. And in the joy of that promise, the strength of that new love, he was ready to forsake all and follow.

St. Peter’s solemn setting apart to the Apostleship, however, came after this. (Luke vi. 12.) He is always mentioned first in the list of the twelve; first, too, among the three chosen to closer intimacy with their Lord. His being an elderly man, with a settled home, may perhaps account for this. But his was a nature which would always unconsciously assert for itself a certain sort of pre-eminence. Whatever the rest might be thinking, he was first to

speak, as in Mark xi. 21; x. 28; Matt. xviii. 21; Luke xii. 41. First in belief, too, he always was, as well as in the expression of it, as in Matt. xvi. 13; John vi. 67—69. This last was at a time when many turned aside and walked no more with Christ; but the “hard saying” was nothing to love, which even then had in measure cast out fear. After the ascension (Acts ii. 8—12) there came the same bold straitforward confession, most uncompromising in its simplicity,—his natural temperament,—trustful, earnest, ardent, showing itself in every instance. Of the doubts which beset the mind of St. Thomas, the rationalist among the Apostles, he knew nothing. Perhaps naturally he would have had small sympathy with them, but, as Isaac Taylor remarks, “When great truths are to be asserted in opposition to splendid and specious errors, there is an advantage in that sort of rude blunt force, which, though it may trample heedlessly on minor matters by the way, takes the right course and reaches the position it aims at.”

So it was with Peter's noble confession in Matt. xvi. 16. It was a flash of that vivid recognition, Spirit-taught, which has no need of slow learning.*

* I give you Bengel's note on the passage. “The Church of Christ is certainly built on the Apostles, inasmuch as they were the first believers, and the rest have been added through their

And yet, characteristically enough, his eager speech almost immediately after brought down on him a keen rebuke: "Get thee behind Me, Satan, thou art an offence unto Me." This (I do not remember from whom I quote), was Peter's first fall: a very ominous one. Not a rock, but a stumbling stone,—not a defender, but an antagonist and deadly enemy of the faith, when he permits the spiritual to give place to the lower nature in dealing with the things of God.

Peter expressed his love by bidding his Lord "pity Himself," put away the thought of crucifixion and suffering, and not become a sacrifice for the sins of the world. But the flesh cannot aid Him, even when it desires to do so, because it cannot interpret His meaning or appreciate His aims. And I sometimes wonder whether, when our human love pleads

labours; in which matter a certain special prerogative was conspicuous in the case of Peter, without damage to the equality of apostolic authority, for he first converted many Jews (Acts ii.), and first admitted the Gentiles to the Gospel (Acts x.), being also in this very passage superior to the rest of the disciples in the fact of his knowledge and his confession. He moreover was specially commanded to strengthen his brethren, and to feed the lambs and sheep of his Lord. Nor can we imagine that this illustrious surname, elsewhere commonly attributed to Christ Himself, who is also called the Rock, could without the most important meaning have been bestowed on Peter. All these things are said with safety, for what have they to do with Rome?"

with those who we think are spending too much strength for God, that they would "pity themselves" and take more rest, we are not unconsciously falling into Peter's sin, and bringing down from the Master the same reproof, so stern from gentle lips: "Thou art an offence unto Me."

It is remarkable that on other occasions when Peter signalised his faith and devotion, he displayed at the time, or immediately afterwards, a more than usual deficiency in spiritual discernment and constancy. Thus again in Matt. xiv. 29, there was zeal and courage, but a sad failure of faith. (Also Matt. xix. 27; Mark x. 28.) He always comes before us as the Apostle of hope,—a very child in his simple-hearted transparency, eager, enthusiastic, full of irregular impulses, but always loving, brusque somewhat and downright, but tender withal and true in heart, though so impressible that his loyalty could easily for a time be swayed from its allegiance. Perhaps, one feels more of personal affection for him than for any of the Apostles: his very failings attract us. We cannot help loving him, drawn by that most intense sympathy which springs from common weakness. So often we stumble and fall, so often we deny even what we hold dearest, that we turn with a kind of relief from St. Paul's "pressing onward," and St. John's calm dwelling "in the light," to him whose

steps faltered, even as ours, and sometimes as sadly went astray.

And in this very point lies the thorough humanity of the Bible characters. They are not ideals, but living men, compounded of the same contradictory elements which we know so well in ourselves. With all his boldness, Peter often failed in true courage,—the courage which can endure, can set itself against the current, and will not take the complexion of surrounding opinions or circumstances. So we come (passing over much which *you* must dwell upon) to the sad story of his fall. Our love for him would almost urge us to pass it over but for its deep teaching: we cannot spare that, lest “we also be tempted.”

- His self-confidence prepared the way for it (John xiii. 37), and prevented him from being impressed by the warning which might have put him on his guard. Mere words do not teach, no matter by whom spoken, unless they are received into an humble childlike heart. Even when Christ says, “I have prayed for thee,” he does not answer, “Lord, I need Thy prayer: I know I cannot stand without Thy help.” He only repeats, “I am ready.”

But the prayer availed still, and the assurance of it may well be our sheet-anchor in many a storm. Earthly friends cannot see when trial is before us,

but His eye—our Lord and Brother—is on the rough bit of the way we have not reached as yet.

“When thou art converted:” literally, “hast returned.” For just as there is needed one great washing from head to foot for all who come to God, and afterwards the frequent “washing of the feet” (John xiii.), so there is one grand conversion or turning, and afterwards the daily recovering from daily wanderings which God Himself promises: “I will heal their backslidings:” “He restoreth my soul.” And after St. Peter’s healing, he knew where his true strength lay, and was able to direct his brethren to the same. We can teach only what we know. Peter, before his fall, would have been an Apostle of self-reliance.

“Watch with Me.” What human tenderness in the words! What a lesson of lost opportunities! Nobly in after years those three disciples served their Master, but they could watch with Him never more. How they must have yearned for the forfeited privilege, how they must have seemed to hear the tender appealing words! We let slip an opportunity of working for Christ, of “watching with Him” perhaps for some soul, and it never comes again. Other work He may give us, but not that. We yearn to have it back: but, no! Too late: too late!

And does not Christ often plead with us to "tarry with Him and watch," in some Gethsemane of our soul's passion, wherein, dimly and far off as it must be, we still may share in some measure the agony of His?

"Simon, sleepest *thou*?" Did not his heart mis-give him, as he, whose protestations had been loudest, was thus singled out for special mention?

Then came the sad "following afar off" which showed the effect of unwatchfulness. He was content now not to be quite close to his Lord. He would not lose sight of Him, but he would run no risk in keeping near Him. How many days pass thus for you and me, when the press of busy life and thought shuts out from us the Master's smile, and we are content to have it so:—when we know indeed that He is not far away, but His presence is not a living joy to us. We do not look up from our work and care to be sure of His guidance,—we are not near enough to share His thoughts or to lay on Him our burdens. And when temptation comes, we fail. His hand would have upheld us, but we cannot lay hold of it. The bride in the Canticles leaned on the arm of her Beloved. She was sure of His support. She might stumble, but she could not be utterly cast down. Where are we—near, or following afar?

Peter thrusts himself into temptation (Mark xiv.

54),—and this from curiosity. (Matt. xxvi: 58.) How often do we pray, “Lead me not,” and wilfully defeat the answer of our prayers! What of our reading books and mixing in society which we know to be “of the earth, earthy”? We feel that our spiritual tone is lowered,—that our persistence is at the cost of our communion with God; and yet we will not face the truth. We go on putting conscience down,—condemned even in the thing we allow,—but never rousing ourselves to break our bonds, or honestly praying that they may be broken for us.

No wonder the sad sequel came. Again the faint-hearted disciple saw the waves boisterous around him, and again he was afraid. But this time, instead of crying, “Lord, save me!”—he sought to save himself. Hence he was allowed to sink—low,—but not utterly.

We grieve for him: but what of ourselves? It is easy to sing, while many voices join us,

“Jesus, and shall it ever be—
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!”

But what of our standing alone when the test comes? We can speak of Christ, but what of our speaking for Him? He is “not ashamed to call us brethren,” but do not our lips falter as we own Him Lord? Love only will keep us from shame.

Let us beware of hiding our choice. Let all know it. "I love my Saviour, but I don't talk." Well, you need not, if you are quite sure that your life speaks plain enough without words. But remember, confession there must be, from you now, if you would have confession from Him hereafter.

"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Does He never turn and look on us when we are bringing reproach on His name, when our hearts are growing cold, when we are choosing deliberately the society of those who are careless of Him! Perhaps we remember a time when He spoke to us, and showed us a little of His love, but we soon forget it. Ah, He does not forget! And again and again comes a gentle reminder, a tender look, of which we know full well the meaning. Well, if we too weep bitterly. Well if we do not make these times of reminding, times of putting Him away from us, till He leaves us to ourselves and speaks to us no more.

Peter's love had been real all the while, so real that the Lord's look at once pierced him. The eager heart had trusted in its very eagerness and been led astray by it. But it came back from its wandering, true as ever: not confident now, but broken and contrite, ready for the touch of strength and healing which should fit it at last to strengthen others. One interview there was with his Lord on which silence

rests for ever. God "keeps the softening veil in mercy drawn" over the weeping confession which Christ alone must hear. But we do know that, of all the twelve, he was the first to see his risen Lord (1 Cor. xv. 5); not kept waiting in the dreariness of doubt, but received again into the love which he had denied. This, his personal restoration, was kept secret from all. His reappointment to the Apostleship took place in the presence of those who were concerned in his official position, so to speak, but not in his individual relation to his Lord.

I think we forget too much the intensely secret nature of all our dealings with God. One of the old mystics, we are told, called prayer, "the flight of the lonely man to the only God,"—and even so the "act of faith must be the meeting of the soul alone with Christ alone."

"Tell my disciples *and Peter*." It was a message of love, stronger than death,—of love which many waters cannot quench. Joy for us in the thought! While we believe not, or even deny, He abideth faithful: while we forget, He remembers. The mention by name too, has its own precious meaning. Not in mass, but soul by soul,—so Christ calls, and so He leads us; His knowledge of us not general but special; His messages to us as distinct, if we watch for them, here in England in the nineteenth century,

as there in Judea, for Peter, in the first faint twilight of the Christian dawn.

And then with the twelve he went to wait in Galilee, the old scene suggesting thoughts of the old toil, and his restless energy prompting the characteristic, "I go a fishing," which led on to that manifestation at Tiberias, on which our thoughts dwell with lingering wistful love and reverence. It is very interesting to notice the connection, or rather the want of connection, between this twenty-first chapter of St. John and the one preceding. He has been called the Apostle of the sunset,—first the stormy sunset of the Apocalypse, and then the calm brightness of the Gospel and Epistles of his old age. And we are led to suppose that it was his last task on earth to prepare his Gospel. How he throws his whole soul into it and lingers over it, as if he never could have done! Notice the close of chapter xx. 30, 31. *That* is evidently the formal finishing of the Gospel. He seems just about to lay down his pen, but still he cannot bring himself to say farewell. He will add a postscript, a supplement,—something more of his Master and his Master's friend, and his own; for, after the Saviour, he speaks most of Peter, and we know how close and tender was the friendship between these two,—a friendship of which this chapter seems the seal.

Only the women to whom Christ appeared brought the disciples His command to go into Galilee, and there is no recorded confirmation of it from Himself. But if they longed to meet Him again, it was worth their while to go even to the uttermost parts of the earth to do so. If Christ gives a hint that He is to be found in quite a different way from any we have known, let us go, like the disciples, even unto Galilee. If there is real hunger after the knowledge of Him, there will be openness to receive it in any way it may please Him to send it. Obedience will not be in vain.

The disciples waited for their Master, but not in idleness. There are times for us also, as for them, of uncertainty and suspense,—times when something seems gone from life, and memory is busy with it all, and sad retrospect is easier than hopeful on-looking. Better not to fight down restless thoughts by direct effort: turn them into another channel: set about the work of the day. Remember the something, great or small, which is to be “done next.” Go a fishing. And so, “in the trivial round, the common task,” the Master will come to us. We shall see Him on the shore of our trouble, standing in the morning light, bringing the joy which follows a night of tears. He will cheer us with loving words, and strengthen us with heavenly food. And

we shall go in the sunshine, with glad heart and free, ready for the harder following which is to come.

"They caught nothing." Did their thoughts go back to that other night of fruitless toil? This one repeated the same lesson, always needed for the Lord's labours,—a lesson of waiting and resultless striving, which must teach despair of self, and thus prepare for the manifested power of Christ.

Lange remarks here, that their humiliation must teach them to distinguish between activity which originates from human authority (that of Peter) and that which depends on the word of Christ.

But I must not wander into general thoughts. Peter was not the first to recognize his Lord. "To perceive the Divine in life," says Schleiermacher, "is a great service of love,"—and this was reserved for the still vivid intuition of another disciple. But if he was keener-sighted, Peter was more ardent; John knew Him. Peter, forgetful of net and fish, dashed into the water to reach Him. So little, however, can we judge depth of feeling by outward signs. Peter acted characteristically upon impulse. John, with his, perhaps, even more intense affection, was content to remain in the boat and help in dragging the net to shore. Each character has its work and its use. Each was fitted to serve God in his own

"vocation and ministry." Each may teach the other a lesson of charity.

And then we know how "the three denials were lost in the three confessions: how the thrice-plighted backslider was thrice charged to feed the flock, the lambs, the sheep. No partial ministry, no sign of humiliation attached to the service. The forgiveness was complete. The restoration was vital."

Once more, the last time on earth, comes the sweet "Follow Me." It is a command as comprehensive as the question which preceded it. Love to Christ the motive of life; Christ Himself its model; following Him its one duty; the whole circle of Christian doctrine lies within these three points. "The continuation of the beginning, crowns the completion of Christianity."

One cannot but suppose that the words were accompanied by some literal withdrawal from the rest of the group, which Peter evidently understood as the shadowing forth of a deeper meaning in the command. "In the beginning of His ministry Christ had said to Simon, 'Follow thou Me.' The same words were used again. Jesus foretold the circumstances of Peter's death, and then said, 'Follow Me.' The broken link was taken out and this new one put in its place."

But we may look a little more closely into what

precedes, and I will give you another of Lange's pithy sentences.—“Peter's humility, his dropping of the ‘more than these,’ was the first mark of his fitness for the office to which he was called. His love to Jesus the second. His acknowledgment of Him as the Searcher of hearts, the third. And yet his love was the single and only one, as the root both of his humility and his confession.

Again: why was there no questioning of Peter's faith? Because its development in humility, love and confession, proves its presence. Christ asks of him only one question, but it included—how much! “We love Him because He first loved us;” have we responded thus? Then are we one with Him, and ready for His service.

On the form of the question I will refer you to Trench's “Synonyms of the New Testament,” in which you will find an interesting distinction between the two Greek words which in our version are equally translated by the verb, *to love*.

Then comes the prophecy of Peter's future. To a man of his temperament, how much easier to do and dare and sacrifice, than to wait and endure and be still!

Jesus promises him a high place in His Church, both in action and in suffering; but it was in action for which he had shown himself unfit by his denial,

in suffering from which his eager nature would most keenly recoil.

The "stretching forth of the hands," is explained by many interpreters, both ancient and modern, of their extension upon the cross. But, as the "carrying" follows after this, may not this first clause signify the self-abandonment which leans wholly on the power of another, and is content to follow and be led, even where it "would not"? A lesson truly hard to learn, for even after we give Christ our sins, we keep from Him our will. We plan our own lives and choose our own work. And the result, as we too well know, is unrest, disappointment, failure.

Try another plan. Ask Him to take, not your guilt only, but *yourself*. Bring your will to Him: daily and hourly a fresh offering. Ask Him to take it from you, and to let His only rule and guide you. Put all into His hands. Are you afraid of what this may involve,—the going "whither you would not"? Not if your will is His. Pain there may be still,—must be,—as you walk in some path where all is roughness and darkness, where dearest voices are still. But there will be no conflict, no passion of unsubdued struggles, because your choice is one with His, and in submission is rest.

Tholock sees in the question about St. John a want of concentration, the overflow of natural eagerness

and vivacity, in that Peter turned so quickly from himself and his own fate to question as to the future of another. To me it seems rather dictated by love, which could not rest without linking with itself the one so much beloved. They three: should anything be told of himself, which he might not know of his friend?

The difference of the two in their relation to Christ is very marked here. Between Him and St. John everything is understood, as it were, in silence. Between Him and St. Peter everything must be spoken and explained. Peter's blunter perception does not realize this. He is almost jealous for his friend, lest he should receive less than the Master was giving to him.

We have seen St. Peter as the denier. Let us think of Him now as the noble confessor of Christ, speaking of Him in terms from which every trace of hesitation has vanished: "This is the stone which was set at nought," etc. (Acts iv. 11, 12.) And throughout the Acts, so long as the history follows him, he is always, as of old, first in speech and in action,—but his vehemence calmed, and his native irresolution overborne by the steadfastness of love. He is himself still; his strong characteristics never effaced,—only their excellencies developed and their defects repressed. "Weakness became strength. The

sanctified character is the old character sanctified, and the law of the change is, 'Every man hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner and another after that.'

But still we may see how his sympathy with weakness and diffidence remained; how he calculates on it, and allows for it, and meets it in a fashion peculiar to him,—not with argument, like St. Paul, or simple assertion, like St. John, but a straightforward appeal to external evidence, not to be contested. (Acts v. 32; x. 37, 38, 39; 2 Pet. i. 16.)

He is courteous too. The rough Galilean fisherman has caught his Master's gentleness. Even to the mockers on the day of Pentecost he speaks with a certain delicate politeness: "These are not drunken, *as ye suppose.*" And under all the terse, somewhat rugged diction of his Epistles, there is the same tenderness. He had learned it in a school of sorrow. He, of all men, knew how his Lord had dealt with the bruised reed. One can fancy a softened look upon his face, brought there by sacred memories, as he wrote, "Be pitiful." A thought too of the past mingles in his, "Be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you, *with meekness and fear.*" And some writer remarks how, in "reading the first Epistle of Peter, we cannot but be struck with the repetitions found nowhere else, setting forth the

difference between suffering for well-doing and for ill-doing. These occur four times. Now, why this frequent repetition of the same truth in the same way in this short Epistle? Let us picture to ourselves a scene in Peter's life, the most well-remembered scene of all,—that in the high priest's palace. All will then be clear, full of meaning and of life. There was the startling contrast between suffering for well and ill-doing: the most startling ever exhibited, which never left memory and heart, and never will."

Stier remarks of Peter's vision at Joppa, "In this type was the blessing of Peter's future sphere foreshadowed to him,—how he might hope for the enjoyment and satisfaction of all the longings of his heart, yet only through the denial of that which may be most accustomed and pleasant to nature, with submission to God's judgment and choice of grace, by which He declares what before Him is right and pure. As to which sentence we all have to overcome such shrinking of our natural and wordly mind."

And yet one glimpse we get of him which shows his old weakness not entirely eradicated. (Gal. ii. 11, 12.) "He withdrew and separated himself." "The words," says Lightfoot, "describe forcibly the timid and cautious withdrawal of a timid person who shrinks from observation." His affectionate im-

pressible nature was peculiarly sensitive to the opinion of others. With all his individual force of character, he was easily influenced. Many of us can sympathize in this. It is difficult to us to differ: to stand alone in opinion or action. Our own convictions of truth may be very clear, but we hesitate about confessing them. They are easy comfortable days we live in, and the spirit of protest is not over vigorous. It has given place, not always to the true charity which can discern error while it "hopes all things" for those who hold it, but to a false charity which carelessly acquiesces in it as a thing indifferent. There is a snare for our feet here: let us watch and beware. Christ asks from us the confession of the lips, as well as the allegiance of the heart. We need the meekness of wisdom it is true, but we need no less its firmness.

Especially is it hard to differ from the "religious world," so called. Does it not seem presumptuous, self-willed, perverse? Shall we not give needless offence, and cause our good to be evil spoken of? Had we not better lower our standard? Perhaps it is pitched impracticably high after all. At any rate no one seems to be living up to it, even of those who seemed to be "in Christ before us."

Specious pleas all of them. To which there is just one answer: "Study to show thyself approved

unto God." If you are sure the standard is His there can be no question about lowering. "Walk before Me and be thou perfect,"—such was His word to Abraham, and it is in no wise altered for us. *Before Me*,—and, as to man's judgment, let it pass. Another word is true too: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It has not lost its force in these times, though we are apt to think so, possibly because though we are in Christ Jesus we are not quite "living godly" in Him: *i.e., god-like*,—fashioning our lives by His rule, and making everything bend to that. For, so living, the persecution will follow in no doubtful shape, though it may be an unexpected one.

It is very beautiful, however, to notice St. Peter's singular humility in thus accepting public rebuke from one so much his junior; recognising, too, the wisdom of the reproof, and speaking of the reprover years after as his "beloved brother Paul." It was such a test as we might very possibly fail under; trying somewhat sharply how much of the Spirit of Christ,—the meek and lowly,—we really possess.

So, again, is repeated the old lesson, which God varies for us in many shapes,—that His saints of old were by no means raised above the level of ordinary humanity. St. Peter denied his Lord, and even after his baptism with the Spirit he had not moral

courage enough to act on the conviction which had been impressed upon him both by a vision from heaven and a direct command of God. Yet was he a pillar of the Church, not to say the chosen disciple whose name had been directly given by Christ. Then we may take hope even from his failure. He was not "already perfect," and we, in strength made perfect through weakness, may "follow after."

Yet it is true, as Adams remarks in his "Private Thoughts," that, "It is the will of God we should put Him on doing moral impossibilities, and till we do, we neither know Him nor ourselves." Changed into His image, such is His will for each of His chosen. The passionate heart He can control; the timid strengthen. We look at this grace or that, and say, "I can never attain it: my whole character is opposed to it." Possibly. The goodness that comes natural to us is no attainment at all. But what of the "working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself"? Are we resigning ourselves to that? Then no waywardness or incompatibility of material can prevent the Master from moulding us after His own pattern.

Remember how it was with St. Peter. "Thou shalt be called Cephas," was our Lord's greeting to him when they met, that memorable day on which a brother's love first brought him to Christ. *Thou*

shalt be: the new name was not yet his. Full of love and eagerness he was even then, but as unlike a rock as he well might be; too easily moved this way and that, to be a foundation-stone in the building even then begun.* But afterwards (Matt. xvi. 18) his Master says to him, *Thou art Peter*. A change had passed over him: his faith had joined him to the living Rock, and he had become transformed into the same likeness,—in measure only, but still truly. That faith first gave him the “Petrine character” as it has been well called, which he had not naturally, and through daily association with his Lord this character was strengthened and developed. Is our faith uniting us to Christ? Then we must grow like what we are associated with. The force of His life within must have power enough to change even the bent of ours. Provided always that we are near enough to Him for that force to act upon us and through us as it will.

Yet, even thus, the transforming must be gradual. “We are changed”—but the expression denotes a continuous, not an instantaneous process. “Changed from glory to glory,”—so there are degrees of progress, which may be more rapid or less to our perception. But if only we are sure of our own honesty

* See “Lessons on the Life of our Lord.” By Eugene Stock.

in putting away all that hinders progress, we may well have patience with ourselves in its slowness, even as God had patience. Let us have patience on the one hand, and yet on the other be no less mindful that there is much with which we must have no patience. The kingdom of God in the soul must advance by conflict as well as by growth. We are not only to gain in likeness to Christ, but we are to lose what makes us unlike Him. Each step is won in our race at the cost of something left behind. The death of Christ is not only the ground of our hope in death, it is the pattern of our daily living,—living which must be daily dying through the power of His life in us slaying the old man and quickening the new. And the slaying of the old is often in long agony,—no figure of speech, but reality terrible and solemn.

Do our hearts fail us? Well they may: but His power fails us not. So we come back to our old ground: let us trust that and rest in it. Let His love flow into our souls and fill them. Then struggle and sacrifice will lose their bitterness, if they must keep some of their pain. And in measure now, and how much more fully hereafter, we shall find that all we give up for Christ's sake He gives back,—a joy for ever, made fairer and fuller than we could have dreamed. We may enter into life maimed for His

sake ; but in Him we grow up into the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

God's work begun within is a pledge of His work finished. His work is perfect : can He rest in imperfection ? Will He leave the spiritual, any more than the material creation, till all is "very good,"—till He has realized, so to speak, His own thought and wrought out His own design ? "Until the day of the Lord Jesus" let us look on and hope.

DIFFICULTIES.

YOU wish you were more like your friend and mine, Miss I——, but you despair of ever being so. I do not think your wish is likely to be accomplished ; but why should you despair if it is not ? We might save ourselves much, if we could only see how useless is the attempt to engraft an opposite nature on our own. *Be yourself*, dear ; that is what God asks from you, except in so far as He changes you into His own likeness. Our individuality is His gift. He has not formed men and women on one model, any more than leaves and flowers. Happily, nature is too strong for our efforts after conformity, but even the struggle for it is hurtful. In proportion as we imitate, we become untrue.

In each of us there is some tendency of natural character which marks us off distinctly from others. It is to be restrained, no doubt, but not eradicated. God has some purpose for it, and we may trust Him to mould it to that. Does our Heavenly Master

need to have all His tools fashioned on one pattern? If He uses one for one kind of work, may He not want quite a different instrument to do some other? He will not set the hammer to polish gems, or the delicate chisel to hew stones from the quarry. But if only we are lying close to His hand, ready to be taken up and used at any moment, in any way, we may trust Him to choose our service. And remember, it is never true unless we get it straight from Himself. What we do because we see another do it, is mere copying. God's work for us may be something entirely different from our anticipation,—but it is *His*, and that is enough. Does it matter whether we carry out this or that bit of His great plan, when it is all *one*?

I pass on to another sentence in your letter. "You will never feel as good people feel. You thought that when you began to love Christ you would grow better every day; more willing to give up self; more 'detached' from the world. Instead of which you are longing for some tangible, material happiness. The old spell is strong upon you still: will it ever lose its power?"

And so, though you have only just sown your field, you are disappointed because the harvest is not already ripe! Do you not know that in spiritual as well as natural husbandry, there must be "long

patience" first? The blade is not the full corn, but it enfolds it, and though the *unfolding* is not yet, it will come. Cherish the life you have. Guard it and pray over it. Imperceptibly, but surely, it will increase, for growth is its law. Only keep near to the source of growth,—to Him who has promised to be as "the dew unto Israel." Be sure that nothing hinders His grace from flowing over your soul and filling it; and, for what that grace will work, if you are working with it, wait His time.

Do you remember him who complained that he "saw men as trees walking"? Yet his eyes had been opened by the Light of Life; and so have yours: and He never leaves His work unfinished. He will give you the open vision you long for, only He will choose His own hour for the gift. But you can ask Him for it: you can go to Him with your complaints about the darkness, and plead with Him to remove it. He may try your faith, and discipline your patience by delay; but His hand is upon you still, and while that leads, you are safe. You may not understand why it is best that you should not at once see all things clearly, but you know that He makes no mistakes. And perhaps, through our groping in the shadow for awhile, comes a more intense yearning for the light, and a more absolute willingness to be guided by it.

For may it not be that the light dawns for us slowly, because we fear it? Deep down in our hearts, so deep that it escapes us without sharp scrutiny, lies a certain shrinking from what it might reveal. It may show us some stern truths, about sacrifice for instance,—about a “giving up” which shall not be nominal. And flesh and blood fail here. We fear as we enter, not “into the cloud,” but into the brightness. Is it not true, that we do not see it because we dare not?

But how shall we get rid of the fear? I think only by taking it to Christ. We need not hesitate to tell it out to Him. He will not chide: He will only bid us stay in His presence till He puts it away. And this brings me to the true help for your difficulty about becoming “detached” from the world. It can only be through closer attaching to Christ. You remember St. Paul’s words to the Thessalonians: “Ye turned *to* God from idols”? The *turning from* is only possible in the strength of the *turning to*. Do not be too much troubled because you find it hard to give up this or that. Think rather of what Christ has to give you, and open your heart to receive it. The more it is flooded with His love and joy, the less room there will be for anything else; for, in one sense, it can only be emptied by being filled. All “turning from” without this, will only

be,—as to many good people it is,—the brick and mortar of hard bondage ; no “offering of a free heart,” but something they would gladly withhold if they might.

I have said very little, dear, and not at all as I should have liked to say it. We never know till we are tried by some attempt to help others, the poverty of our own resources,—the impossibility of feeding the hungry soul with the bread of life, even though it is our own stay and support. Yet perhaps our cry that God Himself may give them their portion, is the truest succour we can offer.

“OUR PRESENT DAY.”

I FEEL very strongly the truth of what you say about religious talk and controversy. Is it not a sad sign of the times that terms expressing the deepest and most sacred truths of our holy faith are bandied about in the flippancy of drawing-room or dinner-table chat? Or else they are flung backwards and forwards in careless irreverence of party dispute, till they have come to be associated with theories and counter-theories, with suspicions and recriminations, and we think of them too often only as weapons of attack and defence.

For you, dear, as for myself, my one longing is that we may be hidden in the cleft of the rock,—kept under the shadow of our Redeemer's hand. The din of strife will not reach us there; but in living communion with our Lord we shall know the “truth which makes free.” Differences will adjust themselves in the light of love and the untroubled calm of faith.

And is it not after all entirely consistent with

sound philosophy to let reverent faith supply the missing links of reason? There are difficulties we cannot explain, and mysteries we cannot solve; but the refuge from doubt we do not find in knowledge we may find in ignorance and patient trust. What seem to us contradictions may lie only in our imperfect apprehension. Truth may be presented to us not as it is in itself, but only as we can grasp it. There may be absolute and higher truth of which what we know is only the shadowed outline: we cannot reach it now, but it waits for us "behind the veil." And meanwhile, as God's truth is *one*, we need not be terrified by any fragments of it which as yet we cannot fit into their place in the whole.

You and we have much to be thankful for, in that the teaching of our stated ministry is rather positive than aggressive. The full setting forth of truth in due proportion, is surely the best safeguard against error. Many complain of it I know, as monotonous and tame. Morbid craving for excitement demands something sensational on Sundays as well as weekdays; and it is pleasant to have thought drawn away by combating heresy in other people, from innate and uncomfortable scrutiny of oneself.

Out under the lime trees this morning, with the whirl of winged things about us, and the whisper of leaves overhead, Alice and I had a talk which re-

minded me of you. You know I am visiting the Linton's: happy with them always, in the thoroughly "at home" feeling which makes any visit enjoyable. But still the atmosphere of discussion which fills the house brings me sometimes to the last point of irritation. Mr. Linton is a good man, but the "combativeness" which his clerical calling debars from any other outlet, develops itself in theological "fencing," to an extent which I do not like to characterize. Even his gentle wife is infected, and his two older girls, "up" in all the controversies of the day, are as quick to detect anything heterodox, and as eager to do battle with it as himself. Alice, the third, holds aloof, in a silence which seems half scornful, half perplexed. Her's is the deepest nature of the three, but she is not at present what anyone would call a "pleasant" girl. She is moody and restless and erratic; at war with most things in her world, within and without. She interests me intensely, but I have never dared to show the interest. People have tried to "do her good" till she has turned like a wild creature at bay, and will have no more of it. She has "taken" to me; I cannot tell why, unless it is because I let her alone. But she shows the "taking" in a curious contradictory fashion, which I thought meant dislike, until her mother informed me to the contrary. So I was a little

surprised when she joined me in the garden to-day. I had taken my work out of doors, Mrs. Linton being busy about domestic matters, Mary had gone into the parish, and Kate to the school-room where she teaches the younger children. Alice occupies a middle position in the household, the work belonging to which she does not seem to have found.

To-day she was in a quieter mood than usual,—softer, I should say, for in general she is quiet enough. She took up a book I had been reading: “Albert Durer and his Works.”

“I wish I had lived in those days,” she said; “life must have been easier in those old-world German cities, with their still, quaint ways.”

“I fancy life is life always,” I replied. “For Durer’s mother it does not seem to have been a particularly easy thing: she had eighteen children.”

Alice laughed. “But I didn’t mean troubles of that kind: I meant,—I hardly know what.” She threw herself on the grass at my feet, and looked up in my face. “I feel wicked inside this morning, and I know you do too, if you would only say so: that talk at breakfast made me stamp under the table.”

Truth to tell, I had almost done the same myself. Mr. Linton and a clerical friend, who came in from the country and arrived at the vicarage by eight o’clock, had been indulging wit at the expense of

charity, against some of their fellow-Christians, in a way that pained me exceedingly, both for themselves and their listeners. The elder girls were encouraged in the same wrong, and the flush on Alice's cheek told its own tale.

"But Miss H——," she went on abruptly, "you won't think that because I hate all this horrid controversial talk, I don't care for—for"—

She stopped, but the wistful, reverent look in her eyes filled up the sentence.

"Dear Alice," I said, "I think it is just because you *do* care for holy things, that you cannot bear what even seems like a careless touch upon them."

"Thank you," she said; and then she went on turning over "Albert Durer," while I waited for what might come next, and the soft speech of nature fell into our silence.

"Dear me, how strange," she exclaimed at last: "here is old Albert saying just what I felt this morning, and couldn't find words for: 'Oh, for an Evangel cleared of all human commentaries.'"

"Then don't you see that he and you were just fighting the same battle? The field of it is the world, and the length of it is all time. There was one phase in the Nuremberg of three centuries ago, and another in this town to-day. Surely the longing of all hearts which God has touched must be the

same, for the light of His truth, without the darkening of man's speculations. But does not Christ promise it: 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' Only we can't have it without the condition."

"And that is so difficult!"

"Is it not impossible, dear, till we get power beyond our own? Only we can pray,—

"That which Thou would'st have me, make me:
Let Thy will in me be done."

Our strength is in those words: "It is God which worketh in you to will and to do."

"It seems hopeless," she said despairingly.

"Dear Alice, how many have trusted themselves blindly to Christ's hand, and gone with Him on His bare word until the time came for their eyes to be opened!"

But Alice went back to her old sigh: "It is so difficult!"

"Only where love fails: for he who loves, trusts."

"Then how are you to get the love if you hav'n't it?"

"Not by thinking about it and trying to grow feelings. But do you remember Louisa's hymn last night:—

“ ‘There is a green hill, far away
Beyond a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who made and loves us all.’

“If we have ever heard from Him who died there those wondrous words, ‘For thee: for thee!’ then all our pride and coldness will melt, and the difficulties about loving will melt with them. Was it not so with the poor woman in Simon’s house? It was the sight of Jesus which touched her heart and brought the flood of tears with which she bathed His feet. She saw Him, the Friend for whom she was yearning, how could she but weep. *Just as she was* she came to Him: what joy it is to think of that! Not because she loved Him, or was worthy of His love, but because she *needed* Him. Don’t we often stay away from Him because our faith is weak, because our hearts are cold, because we grieve Him, oh, so constantly? Better come to Him as we are, that He may make us what He would have us.”

“Yes:” said Alice hastily putting the thought by; I believe, to be taken out and pondered some other time: “but you remember that coil of opinions Mr. Yorke was trying to unravel this morning? Not that he did unravel it, or if he did, I could’nt follow him. And how full of confusion it all seems!”

“Is not that because we begin at the wrong end,

—with trying to understand, instead of doing and loving? We keep reading our New Testament backwards, beginning with Revelation or the Epistles, and working *down*, instead of passing up to these through the simple story of the Gospels. It is there Alice,—the ‘Evangel cleared of all human commentaries.’ It is not what has been—but what is. Christ answers all your questions to-day, in the very words He spoke to those Hebrew men and women then. He has said it all,—what we are striving to work out with such a gasp and strain of heart; and after all our reaching and groping and puzzling, we must become as little children,—go back and find it there.”

“Yes, but it isn’t *our own*, unless—”

“Unless we grow to it?”

“No: there again; how can we grow?”

“What is growth but life? And is not Christ the Life as well as the Way and the Truth? Has He not come that we might have, and more abundantly?”

She looked up at me then, a bright, flashing glance,—but it passed in a moment, and the trouble came back into her face. “You help me,” she said, laying her hand on mine: “why does no one else? Why does no one find out what I want, and give it me?”

“Dear Alice, do you make it possible for anyone else?”

"I could'nt!"

"I don't say its easy—but that is hardly the question. Only I think we are too apt to blame others for not seeing what we draw down blinds to hide."

Just then Mrs. Linton joined us, and Alice went into the house. But she has seemed grave and thoughtful all day, and has clung about me in a wistful fashion which means much. You will ask that the Good Shepherd may Himself lead her in His way of peace, and if she walks with Him there the strife of tongues will not reach her.

But why, oh why, in our deepest soul-needs, do we always stretch out our hands for help,—if to human aid at all, then to some one outside our own little circle? Why must the nearest be so far apart? I never could answer those questions satisfactorily. I know the answers that are given, but they do not content me.

Sometimes, I think, we really do stand in the deeper places of one another's life, where we so much long to be, without knowing that we are there. We ask for word and sign when the thing itself, precious beyond either, is given into our very keeping.

We went for a country walk this afternoon, and I found, while "pottering in the ditches," as you know I am fond of doing, something which reminded me

of all this. The children were wild in the delight of gathering arums,—“lords and ladies” now, as they were in our own childhood. There they were, growing side by side, but they could see nothing of one another but the green hiding sheath which made one look much like the rest. The glory of purple and gold within it, was out of sight. And with us the sheath never falls off entirely here. But what revelations there will be when we get up into the light and glory there!

TO AN INVALID.

I HAD a thought given me the other day which I must pass on to you; it seems exactly to meet your present state of weakness and consequent depression. We had been speaking of spiritual conflict and doubt,—realities both, though some Christians ignore them. And my friend told me how those words in Jeremiah had once been to him a sheet-anchor in some such storm: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." I think I looked, what I felt,—that the appropriation of that promise required a strong grasp of faith, for he met my unexpressed objection by saying,—

"Just reverse the order of the words: you can feel, can you not, that God has 'drawn you with lovingkindness'?"

Yes, truly: how could I look back and not acknowledge that!

"Then remember the 'therefore' which links the

latter part of the verse to the former. The 'drawing with lovingkindness' must be *because* of the 'everlasting love' with which, He says to you, '*I have loved thee.*'"

Now join with this promise our Lord's plea in His prayer for His disciples (John xvii. 23, 24): "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me;" and connect the following verse, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Are not the three together a cup of "strong consolation"? I will not weaken it by any words of mine, but a verse I have read somewhere sings itself over and over in my heart,—

" So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be ;
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love for me."

A remembrance of illness, months ago, helps me to understand what you have been going through lately. I recollect well the gleam of light which fell one night through a "horror of thick darkness." I had been thinking rather drearily of that command in Ephesians, to "take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." But I could not take the shield: I was too weak for any effort. I must be at the enemy's mercy if my faith should be my defence. And then

there came to me,—did not God's own Spirit bring it,—the word of one sore tried, even as I: "Oh, Lord God, Thou strength of my salvation, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle!" What I could not do He would do for me. I needed not, as I had no power, to fight in this battle. I was only to lie still and lay all the strain of it on Him,—only to cling to His hand and say, "Thou shalt answer for me, Oh, Lord, my God!"

We cannot store up comfort and pass it on to others as we would. So I hardly know whether what I have said will help you. But it is cheering to see the "footsteps of the flock" in some rough bit of the way where we seemed to walk alone. Therefore I am tempted to recal another trouble of those dark days, which rose again in memory as I read your letter,—the sorrow of being shut out, as I thought, from work for my Lord. But gradually I came to see how many of my ideas about work had been entirely mistaken: I had thought only of *doing*, and lost sight of being and becoming. I had forgotten that God's will must be wrought in me as well as by me, and that the one could only be in proportion to the other. I had fancied that while I accomplished so much, all must be well; while in reality only work done *as He would have it* will stand the test of "that day." We lose sight of this

too much. We are called, not only to be fellow-workers with God, but to something higher still,—even to fellow-feeling with Him. But this our calling we do not see, or seeing, do not rise to it. We do not seek to know and share His mind about our work: it is too much routine with us. We plan it out, and cut it to our own pattern, instead of looking up, hour by hour, in the love which waits and follows, for the guidance of His counsel. We are not always quite ready to stop and let some one else take it up, caring rather that we should do it, than simply that it should *be* done. And, even in what we count as directly spiritual service, we know little,—oh so little, of our Lord's infinite tenderness and patience! We have not borne, as He did, with weakness, or meekly endured the contradiction of sinners. Our rough handling has broken the bruised reed, where He would have strengthened and bid it lean on Him. Some one comes to us with a question perhaps, and instead of trying to put our minds "alongside" the inquirer, as Dr. Chalmers would have said, we have only wondered that there should be any question in the matter. And then we have gone on, busy here and there, satisfied that we *were* busy, and never heeding that in our bustle we have perhaps overlooked the one thing appointed for us to do.

All this, and much more we see, when God puts a space between us and our eager activity that we may estimate it truly. And then, instead of grieving that we are taken out of it, we grow almost thankful to have everything in the shape of work put aside for a time, that we may be alone with Him who cleanseth the leper. He will find other hands to do what He has taken from ours,—no fear of this,—or He will do Himself that for which He needs no human aid. What we might have *done* suffers nothing from our helplessness; what we may *be*, might suffer sorely without it. It is no loss, but gain beyond all price, to be put down thus into absolute nothingness, that we may give ourselves over to Christ,—to be so filled with Him, that body, soul and spirit, may henceforth be only the organs of His living Presence.

I sometimes think that those who are laid down helpless are called, in a special sense, to share the “burden of the Lord.” We bring to Him our own burdens, but we hardly remember, as we might, our privilege of bearing His; of grieving *with Him* over His law dishonoured and His mercy slighted. There are those who refuse when He calls, and regard not the tender stretching forth of His hand; and it is given us, as priests unto God, not only to plead for them before Him, but to enter as it were into His

heart, and to share, in some small far-off measure, its unutterable love and grief.

And yet again, if God teaches us by His chastening to humble ourselves for our own sin, are we not, as members of His mystical body, to confess that of others also? We mourn over our Church's departure from the simplicity of faith; over the carelessness of her clergy, and the decay of vital holiness in her children; but it would be better if our sighing and crying went up to God, as over guilt which brings us to the dust in bitter shame,—guilt in which we bear our personal share.

"But these things are not real to me," I think I hear you say. Alas, no; they are *not* real to us: would they were! But we must plead with God to make them real, and keep near Him till they are: live near Him always that they may so continue. In His light we shall see their reality. Better that the sorrow of it should oppress us, than that we should be blind to it.

And now, when I have written all this of the service left for days of weakness, I am half inclined not to send my letter, for I know too well that there are hours when one can neither think nor pray; when every other consciousness is lost in that of mere oppression. Especially I know how the request to remember this or that in prayer sounds like mockery

when the heart can scarcely tell its own need to God. But I have merely indicated what *may be*. Do not feel saddened if for the present your prayers are nothing more than a helpless looking up through the dark ; a clinging hold, *for yourself alone*, of a Hand you can scarcely see. He knoweth your frame, Whose judgment of you is true. There are many things you long to speak of to Him, but when you cannot do it, does He not understand your silence ? He hears the sigh which lays them on His heart. He will keep them there and not forget them. Can you not trust Him ?

It is one hindrance to prayer in great weakness, that we make it too much a set business. We look on it rather as formal asking audience of a King, than trustful converse with a Father. We think of it as something to be gone through at certain times and in a certain way ; and hence, with weakened power of body and mind, it seems often an utter impossibility. Don't you think that if we seized a moment of ease or quiet whenever it came, for the swift glance upward which always meets an answer, we should not so often have to complain of weariness or wandering ? There can be no sustained effort in illness without suffering. The very attempt to persevere in it is too much for nerves which will bear nothing. Do not try it. You know that the "eyes

of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears open unto their cry." Speak when you can, and when you cannot, remember that He has no need of words.

I recollect once hearing of a clergyman, long laid aside by over-work of brains, who said that for six months his only prayer had been two words: "Lord Jesus." He could ask for nothing; he could only realize a presence near of One long loved and trusted. It was all he could bear, and for the time, all he needed.

SYMPATHY.

“**J**ESUS stood still and commanded him to be called.” There is much in that *Jesus stood*. He did not give merely a hasty passing touch, —though His power, which indeed needed no medicine, could have made it effectual for healing. But, He “stood still.”

And just remember when this miracle was wrought. It was during that last journey, when, if ever, the prospect of His own suffering might have absolved Him from heeding that of others. He “steadfastly set His face to go unto Jerusalem.” (Luke ix. 51.) Here it is that the types of the Old Testament fail. The bullock, the lamb, the dove, all were unconscious victims. He alone, as the one who loved Him best has emphatically declared, “knew all things that should come upon Him.” The shadow of His cross was upon Him from the beginning, but now it grew deeper. He “entered into the cloud,” and on His human spirit, as on ours, must have fallen a myste-

rious fear. Yet He failed not: He *steadfastly set His face*.

Still there seems to have been a longing for the human sympathy which, thank God for it, was as sweet, as real to Him as to us. He began to "tell the disciples how the Son of man must suffer many things." It was as if He strove wistfully to bring them into the cloud with Him; just as we, when some strange dread is hanging over us, seek to share it with another,—seek, how often in vain, and cry out of our sore disappointment: "the heart truly only knoweth its own bitterness." How we faint under the pressure of our one life, the pain of which none may help us to bear. May it not comfort us in such moments of loneliness to remember that He, our Elder Brother, has known the same: for His disciples "understood none of these things." His sorrow was a sealed book to them, because their hearts gave them no clue to the love from which it sprung. The Master must tread the wine-press alone.

And when *we* meet with such a repulse, or perhaps with blank silence instead of the response we crave for, we retreat, as we say, "into ourselves," and take refuge in silence too, as bitter as it is proud. I think nothing more truly than this shows our unlikeness to Christ. It is easy to love those whose sympathies meet ours; but to find our joy as He found, in bring-

ing ourselves down to weakness,—to bear as He bore, with blundering, wondering misinterpretation,—this is not easy. And yet does not His law of love bind us to a tender consideration which we need never expect others to observe,—to a giving of sympathy which we ourselves receive from none save God? We are not to thrust our moodiness or our misery on our neighbour, we are to keep back even the expression of our discontent; but we are to have keen sight for the burden another is trying to hide, and ready touch to lighten it. And even so, only so, we follow Him who came not to be “ministered unto but to minister.” The weight of coming agony was upon the soul of Christ as He went onwards to Jerusalem with His disciples. Still for others His heart was free,—His eyes were open. We should have made it an excuse for not heeding: “I had so much to think of, I did not notice.” But with Him the cry of need found immediate response: “Jesus stood and commanded him to be called.”

Do we not sometimes feel, in trial or perplexity, that others might help us if they would only stop and listen? But they will not, and in their constant hurry we know it is little use to speak. Let us note the lesson for ourselves, and give what we ask,—leisure to hear, attention concentrated, not divided,—calm, patient consideration.

It may be our busy work, as we think, for the Master, which so overcrowds our lives that we have not time for this "standing still." Sad eyes meet ours, but we cannot stay to read their story. Some look to us for help in battles which we fought long ago, but we cannot turn aside to see how it fares with them in the strife, or to whisper the secret of victory. But He would have said, even though some plans of our own for His service were put aside,—
"Ye have done it unto Me."

How many are around us whose strength almost fails in their sore daily struggle, and yet we never stand still to offer them even a cup of cold water? We all know some one of whom we say, "I wonder how she bears it: her life would kill me!" And yet we make no sign. We pass by on the other side, watching the possible wreck of faith and love and hope, and it is not in us to reach out a helping hand or to speak one word of cheer. We let the brave heart wrestle on in its loneliness, till sometimes the thought *will* come, "If earth is far, heaven is farther: man cares not for my sorrow,—is not God unmindful too?" It is a great victory for Satan to send such a doubt rankling into any human soul. *I* feel,—don't you,—as if I had sometimes helped him to win it.

"But," now I can fancy you reply, "I don't like

to speak to others of their troubles. I can't bear to have my own noticed. Bunsen was right: 'a man hath nothing more sacred, of all that is essentially his own, than his grief.' And yet your grief is just what people seem to think they have a kind of property in; a right to pull out for themselves, and touch, and turn over: which they do in most rough fashion."

But there is such a thing as sympathy which never wounds by direct expression. It is possible to soothe pain without seeming to see that it is pain. Some natures know by instinct how to do this. It is a good gift, given to fit for special ministry. It is born of self-forgetful tenderness, caught from Jesus Himself. But surely for this, as for wisdom, we may ask, if we have it not from Him who "giveth liberally." He can teach it. Let us keep very near Him that we may learn.

Have you ever considered the service of the priests in the Tabernacle of old? One aspect of it seems to link itself with what I have written: their special ministry *for man*. It might not be often exercised, but the occasions of it were as blessed as they were rare. It would have availed the leper nothing to seek help from one of his fellow-Israelites, for these were not near enough to God themselves to restore another to His Presence. But the priest could

bring the poor outcast back through blood and water, and open to him again the way of access to Jehovah. Will you think me very fanciful if I see here an indication of a kind of service which is given to few of God's children, and only to those who live in very near communion with Himself. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Might not many who have left their first love, and slipped down from the higher ground where they once walked in faith, be restored by the loving, healing touch of one whose yearning over their souls would spend itself in crying for His power Who can strengthen even what is ready to die? We do not realize what God would give us in fulfilling this our office of pleading with Him for our brethren,—of drawing others with us into the light and love in which we dwell ourselves. But it is only the priestly lives, hidden in God and to Him wholly consecrated, which have power enough *to tell* upon those which lie on a lower level, and to lift them higher by the very intensity of their own spiritual love. Only to these is given insight, quick and tender enough to detect the hidden spot of evil which is spreading death through the whole being. Only they, in the freedom of their own health, can fearlessly lay it bare; only they can know when healing has been

truly sought and found. And only they know the joy of bringing the healed one back again into the courts of the sanctuary.

One thought more about this priestly ministry. It was out of sight of "the congregation." And is not the highest service of God's people now in a sphere beyond sight even of many among their fellow-Christians? They do not know it, and if they knew they would very likely misunderstand. The broken box of costly ointment was waste in the eyes of some disciples. Perhaps many a true-hearted Israelite, busy in the camp, and much burdened by its tumult and toil, thought he was doing more for God and man than the priests, in their still waiting within the veil. Even so many Christians cannot understand the hidden lives which have no outlet except towards God, and do not overflow much in work which can be appreciated from the outside.

And yet is it not enough for us that we live towards God? If He cuts off, as with some, all the *man-ward* side of our lives, let us believe that He will own and use, in a way we know not, the energies which are shut up to Him. We are indeed redeemed to serve, but the choice of our service is our Master's. It may not be doing, nor even very definite enduring. It may be nothing which others can watch, or that we ourselves can measure. But does not He know

best what He needs from us, and if we are giving Him that, is it not all we ask for ?

“No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God.” Yet God may call, and we, through our unreadiness and earthliness may fail to obey.

ON VISITING INVALIDS.

MAY I give you one or two homely hints about your "invalid visiting"? I can fancy what a ministry of comfort it may be, in a place like S——, where many lonely sufferers are left to that feeling of strangeness which, in illness, means double desolation. You need not wish for a truer mission of mercy than to seek out the sick ones at a watering-place, and try to bring some stray bits of brightness into their shade.

How well I know what it is to say in a morning, as one wakes to the remembrance of "knowing nobody," "Nothing can come to cheer me to-day: there is no one to throw a pebble into the pool and break its stagnation with a fresh ripple." A very pleasant feeling at first. You are glad to be let alone for a space. You would rather not have the trouble even of answering a message of inquiry. It is a satisfaction that you may be as ill as you like, and no visitor need be sent away unseen. But, by and by, when

you have had time to gather up your scattered forces, and, though not perhaps well enough for settled occupation, are still well enough to bear some "distraction," you cannot help feeling rather dreary when the hours wear on and bring you none. Nothing to look forward to when you wake; nothing to think over in the last dreary moment before sleep. It is very hard not to dwell on aches and pains till they are multiplied; harder still not to give way to that inexplicable dread of possibilities, which is one of the skeletons of invalid life. If you should be worse, —if, if, if! Of course you know the "if's" are faithless, but they are very persevering too, and have little insistent voices that will be heard. What a pleasure it is when some fresh, soothing tones from the outside world break in softly on their clamour, and help to quiet it; though, of course, only one voice can really make them still.

Well, it is something to be a sunbeam glinting across such shadows. But you do not know much of illness, Nellie, and I could hardly wish experience to qualify you for your work; though, if it came, I might congratulate the work. Meanwhile, however, do not smile if I tell you a little of "how not to do it," even if my directions somewhat resemble the "doctrine of contradictory inconceivables."

(I.) *Do not stay too long*: it is no true kindness.

Do not suppose that because you have remained a "good while" you have necessarily done well. "Oh," you say, "but she begged me not to hurry, and she didn't seem tired." Possibly not. The tiredness has not come, even to the invalid's own consciousness, still less to the perception of another. The entreaty to remain was given in all good faith; but if, in half-an-hour, you could return unseen, you would be satisfied that it was better not acceded to. Stimulants are good in homœopathic doses; but beyond these there is danger of reaction. You have given variety, that is well; but if you induce exhaustion you have done harm. So you need not rack your brain for entertaining talk, when the most entertaining word you can utter is "Goodbye."

It is difficult, I know, to avoid this over-length, just because nothing warns you of it. You do not feel fatigued yourself. Brain and voice answer every demand upon them, and there is no consciousness of effort to mar your pleasure. You do not dream that, for your friend, the tired chest and head ache with every word, or that she is nervously apprehensive of "talking nonsense," because half her strength must be given to keep down pain. And with no strain like this to pull the check-string, you can go on for an hour very happily, heedless of the minutes as they pass, and quite startled when some trifle

wakes you up to see that time has gone, you know not how, and that "really you had no idea it was so late!" But on the other hand—

(II.) *Do not hurry.* If you are in haste try at least not to seem so; but it is better not to go at all if you have only time to fill the room with an atmosphere of bustle. You do not know the effect of a restless, breathless manner upon one who is weak, how it infects with its own want of repose, and acts upon the sensitive nerves that so sadly need soothing instead of irritation. I once lived near a lady whose flying visits in a time of illness were almost a small martyrdom to me. She never had "a minute to stay." Her goodbye came before I had recovered breath after her rapid greeting. She thought she never tired me because she would hardly sit down; but while she stood half in motion, and rattled off half a dozen engagements with a speed which made my brain whirl, she "took as much out of me" as if she had prosed for an hour. And this brings me to another caution:—

(III.) *Do not speak on too many topics.* Any invalid will thank you for change of thought, for a glimpse of interest outside the narrow world which is shut in with pain. And most helpful and healthful it is to be lifted for a moment into fresher air, and made to feel the pulsations of more vigorous

life; good to have self-centred sympathies widened, and material given for the sick-room ministry of prayer. But if, by way of doing this, you pour out a whole history of work of different "cases" and "classes," and meetings and committees, you are doing,—well, be thankful you cannot understand what. "I wanted to give her something to think of afterwards," you say. Yes: but I suppose you do not wish a head-ache to aid the thinking? And the simple hearing of so much stir and bustle is too much for one who is very prostrate, not to speak of the dreary feeling it often leaves: "I can do nothing! What are my little bits of work compared with all that?"

But, independently of this, it is really difficult for an invalid to follow the rapid transition of conversation, which in health forms its chief charm. The mind is weakened by suffering, and the very sadness of regret, that it will not work as in former days, makes the effort to urge it on harder. Of course this remark does not always apply. I speak only of cases where brain and nerves have been strained till, in their reaction, they will bear nothing. And in these you will generally find it best to touch only on two or three topics demanding only easy attention and no discussion. Therefore—

(IV.) *Avoid argument*, for argument is sure to

excite, and excitement sure to exhaust. You who are well can enjoy a difference; you like to hold your own, and to try your opponent's mettle in holding his; but in illness it is another matter. Thoughts, words, memory, all leave you when you want them. You have forgotten most opinions you ever had, and you are in no state to take up new ones. A few old familiar truths and facts you can cling to, but anything beyond confuses; and these you would rather not have meddled with. "New views" might have their interest once, but you only shrink from them now. You feel unable to estimate them fairly, and till you can do that you would rather not be unsettled in the old. You only crave to be left in peace. What you can hold by is often grasped faintly. You cannot afford to have the grasp still further loosened.

(V.) *Always leave if another visitor is announced.* Pray do not be offended at this suggestion. I have too often seen this rule of ordinary politeness infringed, to feel its enforcement needless. And for an invalid it is generally very trying to speak to more than one person at a time. The wish not to neglect any, the effort to bring all into some sort of connection, or to avert collision if such seems likely, is sure to bring its penalty afterwards. And even if some one else is present, who can entertain

one friend and leave the other for a tête à tête beside the sofa,—still the hum of voices, the difficulty of hearing, and the general movement in the room are very trying, and much better avoided. A quiet talk with one alone may be a refreshment; a room full of talkers may be an overwhelming infliction.

One hint I must add. Do not make many suggestions about wonderful cures, medical advice, etc. To a stranger, indeed, some hint about the latter may be of great use; but, as a rule, it is no true kindness to press new treatment, or new doctors, upon one who has been long ill. I know how often my heart has sunk as I have gone through the inevitable catechising from any new acquaintance. Have you tried this? Have you seen so and so? It is a curious fact that the one thing in which you might be supposed to be yourself most interested, and about which, you are surely best qualified to judge, viz. your own health, is exactly that in which you are most tormented with interference. If you are ill, you are worried with suggestions of remedies ten times worse than the disease, and often themselves contradictory and impracticable. Each friend has some new medical theory which he is anxious to test by crucial experiment, or some favourite doctor, whose treatment has been "wonderfully successful in cases like yours." And, if you are shy of the

theory, and doubtful as to the soundness of non-professional judgment as to similarity of symptoms, you are set down as wilful or prejudiced, and pitied, if you are not scolded. You have faith in your doctor probably. You know, at any rate, that he understands your physical idiosyncrasies, and will not kill you in process of curing by prescribing medicines which never agree. And, in the course of long intercourse, you have grown to like and trust him, resting confidently in wisdom which has never failed you at your need. But, because he is not doctor so and so, the great authority, your friends "wonder you can be content to waste time in trifling. Now if you would only go up to London and see him! It would be so easily arranged!"

Very, to one with strength, and energy, and money at command. Failing any of these three, the difficulties are slightly greater. Besides, the chances are that some one fact puts you entirely out of the celebrity's line. If you were under him to-morrow you would be no nearer health, as you know too well. But you cannot explain, or defend yourself, you can only endure in silence, while you are sermonised and wondered at till only strong self-restraint keeps down an impatient, "Oh, if you would only let me alone!"

On the whole, it is reasonable to suppose that

invalids and their friends are as anxious for health as anyone else can be for them. But they know, better than outside observers, what is possible and hopeful; and may very fairly be left to their own judgment as to these, which is probably as much "exercised" as their neighbour's. In the matter of medical attendance, especially, I think this is true; and if a patient has confidence in a doctor, it is not kind, without strong reason, to unsettle the trust. A random hint, or half expressed doubt, carelessly uttered and soon perhaps forgotten, may work more mischief than you know. And, if no harm comes thus, there may be other mischief wrought. In long illness, which has settled at last into a chronic form, there is probably little to be done, except in the way of alleviation. Slowly enough the sufferer learns to accept that conclusion,—not until after many a struggle, which God only and His angels watch. But, when it is reached, it brings, like most certain things, a kind of rest. If there is not much to hope, it is something to have done with disappointment. The ordeal of repeating the same sad dreary story, the eager grasping each bit of encouragement, only to let it go, the falling back into deeper despondency,—all this is far more wearing than quiet acquiescence, even in constant pain. And it is positive cruelty, real though most well-inten-

tioned, to bring up again the old question : Can nothing be done ? Let it be. If it is hushed, better not to touch it. It has brought suffering enough : why trouble it, when it is at peace ?

Besides, no one can tell what old, wild longing some chance suggestion may waken from its sleep. "I think the air of the Mediterranean would cure you : I wonder you don't try it ; it is a very *elixir vitæ*." Yes, you know that ; and the words fall straight upon a strong conviction that it *would* cure you. But then, you cannot go. Over and over again that plan has been taken out and pondered ; but always with the same result, always to be put quietly by, with perhaps a little sigh of regret, yet with a satisfied remembrance that nothing "good" would be withheld by your Father. But still, you cannot quite get rid of the wish, and it is rather hard to have it stirred up again, just to be combated anew. Probably your friend does not guess that the battle will cost you an hour's sleep.

I might enlarge on many more minutiae, but they are not to be laid down as rules, only caught by close observation and quick intuitive sympathy. It is impossible to say, for instance, whether invalids like to have their health noticed and inquired into (generally, I think, they do not), or whether they may wisely be encouraged, or the reverse, in speaking

of themselves; because, as the Author of "Hitherto" remarks, "There are some people and other people;" and no two cases will come under the same precedent. Routine will not do in dealing with human beings. You may start, *par exemple*, with an idea of sympathising, and in some cases you may only foster morbidness. Or you may determine to give "healthy diversion," and all the while your listener puts by the tale of pent-up suffering, which would lose half its pain if it might have but one outlet. But loving insight will guide you,—a good gift, specially needed for your work, and therefore sure to be had for the asking. Seek it fresh for each visit. Never pay one, without this preparation, and then you will be sure to give unconscious help and cheer, even though you may come away lamenting that you have done no good. I think, by the bye, that you will often do most when you are without definite ideas of doing any. The look of kindly eyes, the touch of a cool hand, the soothing of a low, equable voice, are better than homilies upon resignation.

This I say, knowing, of course, that your visits are not "ministerial." If they were, I might be tempted into further strictures on the score of brevity, and simple keeping to the Word of God and Prayer, without any very lengthened exposi-

tions. I heard the other day of a clergyman who received from a sick man a lesson on this subject, well worthy of note. The poor fellow was evidently restless and uncomfortable, not giving full attention, and apparently wishing the visit ended. "What is it?" asked Mr. —, at last: "is there anything you wish to say to me?" "Oh, sir," he replied, "I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you for what you've said; but do tell me something of what *God* says." And this, after all, is the longing of many a sufferer. Not man's word, however excellent, but God's, brought to us in wisely-chosen portions, as we often cannot choose it for ourselves.

To return. Perhaps you think my cautions absurd. "How can one remember such trifles, and how can any sensible person mind it if they are forgotten?" But you have to do with those who, for the present, are not always sensible. It is a humiliating admission for invalids; but there are many hours when its truth is too painfully real to be contradicted. Mind and body are alike out of harmony, and the jar in one reaches through the other. You know little yet of the mysterious way in which they mutually act and re-act; but even a cold or a headache may teach you something about it, when you have felt generally "out of sorts,"—hovering between irritation and stupidity, and more conscious of your

nerves than was at all agreeable. Let imagination widen this bit of experience. It is enough to guard you from some mistakes, and your own watchful tact will save you from still more. Perhaps this is all we can any of us go upon in our attempts to help one another. For every soul among us knows only its separate world. We may look over into those that lie about us, and borrow something from the borders of them, where they touch our own. But beyond this we cannot go; for no two, however near, inhabit exactly the same range. And health and sickness are very far apart,—apt, somewhat, to lose the memory of one another; and, hence, to misjudge what they have forgotten. But there is insight “laid up,” as well as “wisdom,” in a storehouse of which you know the key. God make you a helper, as you long to be, for the sufferers who often cannot reach the comfort which they know.

A PICTURE.

I HAVE had a rare enjoyment to-day, which came, as so many do, in spite of myself, for I would have put it away if I could. I have seen a dear old woman. How I can fancy your laugh as you read that, as if my sources of pleasure must needs be few! But consider how much goes to one's ideal of an old woman, and you will acknowledge that to find it even faintly realized is not so frequent a delight that we should not hail it. Especially in days when the race of old women, dear or not, is becoming rapidly extinct.

I think, by-the-bye, that one very important element must be missing in the education of the "rising generation." We middle-aged have at least in our remembrance some friend of the olden time, with whose stately deferential courtesy was combined a charm of kindly graciousness nowhere to be found now. We are better, nobler, richer, for having our love and reverence linked to such; for having heard

reminiscences of days when railways were not even in the dictionary, given in the composed, dignified English which was in vogue before we learned to exaggerate and abbreviate, as if we were mentally and physically out of breath: most of all for the remembrance of a chivalrous high-mindedness in men, and a delicate purity in women, of which I am misanthropical enough to fear we shall never see the like again. Certainly that inexplicable grace of manner which belonged to those who bore of right the names of lady and gentleman, before they had been "soiled," as now, "by all ignoble use," has passed away for ever from among us. Much that is pleasing may live in the memories of those who come after "our present day," but of *this* they can keep no record.

However, I am wandering into reflections instead of telling my story. We went into Newbury this afternoon for some "shopping"—tiring work, as you know, from a country home, especially when spring and autumn bring necessary changes of raiment, and Mamma must plan for all the nursery tinies as well as for herself. Mrs. S—— seemed to think my help indispensable, so I was fain to go and "give my mind to it;" few things in this world, and certainly not the matching of colours, being well done without that. Newbury is a quaint quiet little place, where

the curfew still rings, and the inhabitants wake up to a weekly sensation on market days. But this was not one, and the shop-men, at any rate, seemed so nearly asleep that I could have found in my heart to shake them. How they folded and how they sauntered and how they could never find a single thing we wanted! But all was done at last, and Mrs. S—— said to me,

“Now I will take you to see an old lady.”

“Oh no,” I said, “don’t let us go to see any old ladies to-day: its too hot.”

But she only laughed and persisted, so we went,—turning into one of the outlying streets, and stopping at an old-fashioned house, with a green door, and a brass knocker of marvellous brilliancy. And forthwith we were ushered into the “best parlour,” where the air was sweet with dried rose-leaves, and, in the cool shade, and an immense cushiony arm-chair, I could have gone to sleep myself, and been well content if our hostess had never appeared. But she came, and I must rouse to propriety.

And her greeting, most cordial and kindly, put slumber to flight. I was glad to look and listen; to talk I had no need, for Mrs. S——’s powers in that line are considerable, and I was amused to see how good Mrs. Annandale meekly put in a word now and then, sideways or edgeways, as she could; but the

few she spoke were full of force and sweetness and quaint wisdom, and fell very crisp in the homely northern speech. At length she took advantage of a moment's break to press us to join her early tea; we might drive home in the coolness afterwards, and we were so tired, she would order it at once. The offer was too tempting to refuse, and very soon she led us into the dining-room opposite, where I saw for the first time what one must know to understand,—a genuine north-country tea-table. I can't describe it: you must go to American books for pictures of cookery: only I remember the clear crimson jelly, the golden honey and the snowy "short-cake,"—a wonderful compound of all deliciousness; to say nothing of the home-made bread, brown and white, and the delicate pink ham which nestled daintily in its green garniture. And then there was the welcome which sweetened all, and the dreamy sort of rest in which I sat, and enjoyed looking out into a sunny square of garden, wherein grew clove pinks, and sweet williams, and such old-fashioned favourites; while the other two discussed the gossip of the country-side,—births and deaths and weddings to be,—who wanted a cook, and who "would never have good servants because she didn't know how to manage them." Very harmless it was and never unkindly. I have heard gossip ecclesiastical, medical,

and legal, which struck me as being the same thing in different phase and phrase. But, after tea, Mrs. S—— went out again, remembering a want forgotten, and I sat with Mrs. Annandale in the “parlour, window”—not the best, for I begged her to stay where easy-chair and knitting-basket betokened habitual presence. And this was always her summer seat,—the curtain looped back that she might see “up street;” while in winter she retreated to the fireside, and could see only the passing opposite. Nearly fifty years ago she had come to that house as a bride, for her father’s home had been “quite on the other side of the town,” and I daresay the parting from it was a sore thing to her. And here, in the early years of her married life, the rooms echoed to the stir of baby feet and the music of baby laughter—too soon hushed; for, one after the other, two bright buds were gathered by the angel reaper, and the mother gave them meekly, but not without tears. Then another girl and boy were given her, and for awhile there was sunshine in heart and home, till a deeper shadow fell, and after a sharp sudden illness, her husband “went on before.” Then followed years during which she lived only in the two young lives that were growing up together: “Bonnie bairns they were,” she said: “how could I help being proud of them? Willie was so manly and steady and good,

and my frail fair Maggie, that I watched lest a cold wind should touch her, she was like the tall pure lily in the window yonder,—as spotless, I think. She went first, and it was long before I could see that the Lord had done right to take her. But He brought me to it at last: He has patience enough; and I didn't grudge Him so much when Willie died. Well He's keeping them for me, and we'll meet again: but I have to pray I may not be making idols, even in Heaven."

She told me all this very simply and quietly. Her smile was a perfectly happy one, and the pretty northern tongue was as cheery as a child's. There was no appeal for sympathy: no trite moralizing on the sorrows of life. Only at the end she took off her spectacles and sat silent a while, and I saw the clear grey eyes shining with tears that did not fall. I thought of Jean Ingelow's "Song of the Boat,"—

"Oh, one after one they flew away
Far up to the heavenly blue,
To the better country, the heavenly day;
And I wish I was going too."

But I don't think Mrs. Annandale did wish it; or if she did, her wish was made to wait her Lord's will.

"I have so many mercies," she said, "its just wonderful: and there are the poor people."

I caught at that. Could not her experience give me some hints in my district difficulties ?

"I don't know anything about districts," she said ; "I don't think I could help people in a lump, like that. I just find them out, one by one, or rather the Lord sends them when He sees I'm ready for another bit of work : the poor tired mothers that don't know how to keep the home together, because the husband drinks maybe ; or the misguided silly girls that are laying up sorrow and shame to themselves. And one thing comes after another : you've nothing to do but look for leadings, and follow them."

It was a piece of profound wisdom. Does our complicated machinery of "doing good" accomplish half as much as this simple "one by one" ?

But while we talked, there came a diversion in the shape of two young ladies, who like ourselves, had driven in from the country ; and the whole of "our present day" seemed at once to contrast itself with a quickly vanishing past. In they rushed, with a general effect of loudness which made me almost gasp,—wild hair floating behind from under perky little hats, jackets and neckties as mannish as might be, and voices—oh me : *one* "excellent thing in a woman" has gone out of fashion since the days of King Lear ! Mrs. Annandale's silvery tones had no chance of a hearing ; indeed she was overpowered

by something more than voice, for the chatter of those merry lips was evidently not to be stopped by reverence for age. "Oh I don't think so;" "indeed you are quite mistaken:" how *could* they speak so to one who might have nursed their mother! But they were good-natured girls too, and honestly thought they were doing a great kindness in coming to see an old woman. They had only caught the tone of an age which makes itself the measure of wisdom, and has lost the art of looking up. I do not suppose it ever occurred to them that experience is beyond accomplishments, or that years can bring more than they take.

They went at last: but the broken thread of our talk could not be gathered up again; and very soon I had to say good-bye, knowing that here I shall probably never see my old friend again, for I leave the neighbourhood soon, and life for her can hardly be very long. But it will rest me to think of her in some of the busy days that are to come, —waiting, in her patient content, till the Master's token shall summon her beyond the river. How many still lives there are like this,—tiny hidden springs, only known by the greenness round! Narrow, perhaps some may call them, and yet with an outlook towards eternity,—for on that side the soul lies open, the thought reaches wide. I wonder whether

those who are always grasping out into the full world of power and knowledge and most doubtful satisfying, can know one tenth part of their blessedness or their blessing. I wonder too, whether those from whom God has taken so much, do not receive tenfold for what they have not. The "cedars have fallen round them, but they see the light behind." And in that light, who can tell for what future possibilities they are being prepared?

"Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear."

At any rate we know that God's people, like their Lord, must needs be "made perfect through suffering." And following thus in His footsteps, though with bleeding feet, they may reap a richer harvest from love's losses than they could ever have gathered from its gain. The peace He gives, springing from sorrow, ripened by pain, is better than all earth's gladness. And yet, as we walk in the path of His leading, we shall find many blossoms of the human happiness we have ceased to live for, full of unexpected sweetness and refreshing.

"MORTIFICATION."

I HAVE just been reading the "Life of Madame Louise of France." She was a daughter of Louis xv., who left the court of Versailles, which she was in every way fitted to adorn, for the cloister of the Carmelite Nuns at St. Denis. It is a saddening book. One grieves that there was no one to show her the "more excellent way,"—to tell her of the service which is freedom and not bondage. Yet I cannot but believe that she was one of the many hidden ones whom Christ has owned everywhere and always,—one of the lambs He has carried in His bosom, though to many eyes His mark upon them may be obscure. I would not doubt that her soul rested on the one foundation, in spite of all the "wood, hay, and stubble" which other hands had piled upon it. But I am not concerned with this now. I wish you would read the book, and tell me if it does not impress you with one thought,—that we nineteenth century Protestants might learn some

wholesome lessons of self-denial from this Romanist Princess? Of course many of her cloister austerities were useless, childish, and degrading. I see the falsehood of the whole system, and deprecate it from my heart. But there is a "soul of good even in things evil," and I do believe that in our recoil from asceticism, we have gone to the extreme of neglecting "mortification." Yet St. Paul says, "mortify therefore your members which are upon earth:" and he is speaking to those who were by no means in "bondage under the elements of the law." What do we know practically of this "mortifying" in our daily lives? It is good for us to face that question,—good to take it into the light of God's presence, and look at it there. Perhaps we may make discoveries we do not like, but we had better see that the sore festers than heal it slightly.

We do not, I think, dwell enough on sacrifice, as required from the disciples of Christ. There are women in England at this moment, who are acting out the idea of it in a way that shames many who pity their "delusions;"—women whose rule especially binds them to the care of such disorders as, whether from their contagious or peculiarly repulsive character, are liable to be shunned by others;—women who, though in many cases of the highest culture and refinement, do not shrink from nursing the poor

in their own homes, faring as they fare, and remaining with them till their need is over.

"Oh but," we say, "they do it from a wrong motive." Ah well, we may leave that to their Master. The judgment-seat is no place for us, though we are all fond of sitting there. Perhaps an analysis of our own motives might not be too satisfactory in its results. But at any rate, the question for you and me is,—Does knowledge of the right motive blossom out in our own lives, to any such fruit? And I am not sure whether even a mistaken sacrifice for conscience sake may not be among the all things which "work together for good to them that love God."

I daresay you are very jealous of all this, dear Mrs. ——. "Women should not leave their homes," I hear you say. That is a different question: I do not mean to touch it at present. I am only maintaining the need of greater self-denial, which can be as well exercised in our homes as out of them, sometimes far more truly. I may be following my own will in going to see a poor woman down in some dingy back court, while I give it up by staying in the drawing-room to entertain a stupid visitor. But you shall have just one extract from some instructions of the Sœur Therese (such was the name by which Madame Louise was known after she left "the world") to the

novices of her convent, towards whom she at one time filled the office of Mother, which indicate, better than any words of mine, the nature of what I mean by "sacrifice."

"If you feel any repugnance to some duty," she used to say to her spiritual daughters, "do not begin to try and find some lawful way of being relieved from it. Supposing that you find less pleasure in the society of some of your sisters than others, try to be extra kind to them in action when present, and in thought when absent, *without letting anybody find out the reason*. If your opinion is opposed, and you might easily triumph over those who differ with a word, abstain from speaking that word. If some piece of news is mentioned which cannot edify, though it may amuse you, avoid listening, if you can do so without affectation. Certain practices are more difficult to you than to others: observe them with special fidelity without talking about them. Even if you are reproved or punished when not to blame, keep silence before men, and let none know save Him who will certainly reward you."

It is in little things like these that we "Evangelical Christians" are sadly deficient. We do not think enough of yielding our inclination in trifles,—making it an offering to Him who seeth in secret. We like our own way and our own ease. We can submit in

great things, so we say, but we fail under many a smaller test.* We do not even in reference to material things, put a sufficient curb on self-indulgence. We know that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, nor yet the abstaining from either; but we forget that even St. Paul speaks of "keeping under his body." There are very few of us for whom literal fasting would be possible or even right: but we may keep the spirit of a fast by refusing little luxuries by no means necessary to our physical well-being (often hurtful to it), or by quietly taking some distasteful or ill-prepared article of food, without making a fuss about it. Our spiritual health would prosper more if we remembered that the flesh is to be crucified literally as well as figuratively, and that while the body is not to be neglected, but cared for as an instrument of God's glory, it is *not* to be pampered by indulgence, or allowed by even trifling excess, to hinder the spirit in its upward soaring. Self-denial, in its strict sense, can only be exercised in reference to things lawful: as to things unlawful,

* "In visiting the Protestant hospital of Kaiserswerth," writes the Rev. A. Moody Stuart, "it is humbling and instructive to hear that the Evangelical congregations of Britain furnish less useful sick nurses than the Churches tinged with Ritualism, because the nurses that come from us are more anxious to take charge and to administer medicines, than to obey, to learn, to serve. In the German nurses it is beautiful to see the spirit of self-denial, and submission, and service."

we have no choice; and if we would train ourselves to resist in some great temptation, we must learn restraint in trifles. This is what I mean by fasting; not obedience without an object, nor to such an extent as to bring us more under the power of our wretched nerves, but simple resistance in one shape or other to the spirit of self-pleasing.

I suppose the root of the evil lies in our sharing so little the mind that was in Christ. He "pleased not Himself:" and if we were more like Him, we should be less self-indulgent and more forbearing. But we are content too often that He should save us, forgetting that we are saved only that we should walk over self and choose the thorns and the cross; give up our own will to do that of our Lord. Hence the arrogance and self-assertion, the unevenness of temper and roughness of manner, hence too, the indolence and love of pleasure which so often characterize those whom we cannot doubt to be converted persons. They need to be roused to self-discipline, sharp and stern, and, as they would think it, somewhat legal, rather than to be soothed by reminders of their "privileges." They "see their calling," but they overlook the "walking worthy" of it; I do not mean in respect of any glaring inconsistency, but of small unlovelinesses, of which one can only say, that they were not seen in Christ.

And this reminds me of that fair picture in Hosea : "he shall grow as the lily." I wish we could keep it before us, as a pattern of what we ought to be. God gives to some more natural attractiveness of character than to others. It is something we cannot analyse, but which few can resist,—an indefinable fascination, as much a gift as personal beauty. It is a "good gift" too, if laid on the altar which sanctifies,—a talent to be traded with for the Master, though like all such, dangerous to its possessor if not thus consecrated. But it is a still fairer thing to see a character naturally unlovely touched with beauty by the grace of God ; like one of those transparencies which are nothing but grey lines when you look at them alone, but when placed that the light may shine *through* them, they make a picture so fair and soft that you cannot help turning again and again to study it. Are we living so near to Jesus that His light overpowers our shadows,—so near to Him that we catch and reflect His beauty, just as we insensibly grow like anyone we are much associated with ? How often we say, "Such a person has quite caught so and so's tone." Have we caught our dear Lord's "tone," from being always with Him,—His tenderness and meekness, and purity and self-forgetfulness ?

That last word recalls one point in the lily's beauty which it seems hard for human beings to resemble,

—its perfect unconsciousness. And our natural self-consciousness is aggravated, just now, by the tendencies of this analysing, anatomising age, which lead so much to morbid introspection that it seems a necessity laid upon us,—the penalty perhaps of our higher culture. We cannot free ourselves from ourselves. No: but we may strive and pray to be so taken up with Him who is “altogether lovely,” that we may *forget* ourselves.

I have wandered a long way from my beginning; but I am writing a letter, not a treatise, and if I have rambled, you will forgive.

“REGENERATION.”

“**S**O is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Your questions about the mystery of the new birth, dear, find their only answer in those words. We may see the effects of the spiritual life in ourselves and in others, but we cannot trace its beginning or mark out its course. You cannot prescribe rules about *life*: it is a force not to be confined within systems.

The truth is, that we cannot see our way here because of the light: we are blinded by the excess of it. But though we cannot explain this mystery of regeneration, we may experience it without explanation. The needle guides you to the north, though you cannot tell why it points thither. An infant's birth is without its own knowledge, and we must be “born again” and grow up in Christ before we can gain even a faint glimpse of the nature of this second birth; but we may know whether life is present, though we cannot determine how it has come.

Will you tell me that sometimes you cannot feel sure even of this? Ah, I know how one may confuse oneself by endless analysis till *everything* seems doubtful! But what proves the presence of life in the infant? We know it first, do we not, by the little feeble cry which is the expression of want? And in any soul that is born of God there will be the same expression of want and helplessness,—a cry which will utter itself *in prayer*. Here is the test of spiritual life, if we need one by which to try ourselves. Is there an earnest longing after God, though it may be expressed in broken words, or perhaps is not expressed at all? Then there is *life*, and for the rest, let us trust the power which has bestowed, to maintain it. But God imparts His own life to us through means of His own appointing,—His own Word, first of all; and as new-born babes we must feed on that. It is because we do this so little that our growth in grace is slow as it is. We put man's teaching first,—man's thoughts about God's Word above the Word itself. For twenty persons who will read "good books," and with most earnest desire for spiritual profit, you will not find one who will take the Bible, and let thought and prayer brood over it till it yields up its hidden stores of sweetness and strength. Hence, alas, the impressions which are of human origin only, human

influence can so easily efface. Hence the being "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," instead of being deeply "rooted and grounded" in the faith of Christ.

"If ye abide in Me, and *my words abide in you*,"—so spoke our Lord to His disciples. There is something more here than even the mere study of Scripture, precious as that is. The "abiding" implies such a presence of God's Word within us, that every word and thought of ours is tinctured as it were by His; that through His Word we are always in such full communion with His mind that we can never be in doubt as to His will; we are so joined to Him as to become "one spirit," and in this deep union we catch as it were instinctively all that He would have us know and do. But this does not come very early in the Christian life: it has to be waited for at some cost of self-denial, and certainly at much sacrifice of ease. Indolence is the great hindrance to its attainment: we do not make sufficient effort to seek it. I felt much reproved the other day, when a friend said to me that she had often spent three or four hours in waiting before God for light upon some passage which she did not understand; for her example was a rebuke to that mere surface-study of the Bible with which we are too often content, instead of the

musings and pondering over it which is implied in that "abiding" of which our Lord speaks.

But for the beginning of Scripture study, those words in John ii. 22 have often helped me: "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them," etc. They remembered, they did not understand at the time. How often, at first, we say, "I cannot grasp this or that: there is a truth here which seems to contradict some other truth." Or perhaps we feel still more sadly that we do not find anything in the Bible: it does not speak to us at all. Others can hear its teaching, but for us there is only silence. But the teaching of God's Spirit is gradual and slow. Christ is "the Way," but we learn the way step by step. So it was with the disciples; so it is with us. There is much in His Word which we cannot bear till some later stage in our spiritual life, and which is hidden from us till we reach it. Humility and patience are our lessons meanwhile, and they are the only true preparation for knowledge.

I know well that in these days and for some minds there are special difficulties in the study of God's Word. The doubt and perplexity which are inseparable from an age of great mental activity and highly-wrought culture inevitably influence and infect us all. Even the most earnest and singlehearted

feel now and then the shadow of disbelief and denial: just as the unbeliever is not wholly positive in his unbelief, so the believer is uncertain in his faith. The rapid intercommunication of thought renders it indistinct: colours blend one into another, and lines of difference are sharp no longer.

So it is very possible that you also may be troubled by present attacks on the authenticity and authority of Scripture. Remember, however, that even making the widest allowance for the genuineness of hostile criticism, our faith stands, or ought to stand, on grounds which it cannot reach. Even the Scriptures are a means, not an end: "they are they," says our Lord, "*which testify of Me.*" And if we have received that testimony we know well that nothing can deprive us of Him whom it has revealed. The clasp of our faith cannot be loosened, even by the possible loss of this passage or that; for it rests not on the Scriptures but on Christ. True indeed that we cannot reach Him except through them, but, having reached, our hold of Him is independent of any medium. And yet, on the other hand, we love the medium for the sake of that to which it has conducted us. We have found Christ in the Bible, and we cling to it for His sake; we dare not lightly surrender it; we would not cavil at apparent contradictions or difficulties, nor would we judge it

as if God's revelation must in all respects conform to man's rule and measure.

And while I speak of wide allowance for the genuineness of hostile criticism, I do it only for the sake of argument. If we adopt this course, it is not because we doubt ourselves, but because we would not even seem to deal unfairly with those who do; if we decline to use all our resources, it is not because we deem them untrustworthy, but only because we would show how little is really sufficient for our need. But I have no fears for my Bible: let it be exposed to any tests, *it will bear them*. And I am more and more persuaded that the old-fashioned belief of the universal Church is not so groundless as many would assure us. We do not want a new Creed: we rather need our faith in the old one strengthened.

RAINY DAYS.

I OUGHT not to write to you to-day: I feel low-spirited enough to infect you across three hundred miles. Do not suppose I have any cause to be: the very shame of it, I think, only makes me worse. Any reasonable depression one can nerve heart to strive against,—but when it is unreasonable and therefore wrong, “one ought to strive all the more.” Yes: so conscience has just been telling me. But the “ought” is difficult to obey.

Perhaps there *is* a reason, however, for my feeling “dumpish” this morning, though my pride will hardly let me write one so trivial. It is a wet day: the rain beats against the window, and the wind roars in the chimney. I suppose we shall see the blue again some time, but at present the sky is one uniform leaden grey. “Well,” you will say, “and what of that?” Nothing that I can explain, dear, for if you could understand the explanation you would not need it: only be thankful that you were

born insensible to atmospheric influences, and pity those unfortunates whose spirits rise and fall with the barometer. It is not that I murmur at the weather: I only know that, in some states of it, I must resign myself to simple endurance; for the clouds *will* hang low sometimes, on mental as well as material horizons. The mountain heights are shining clear above them, but I am not there, and faith is not sight.

Life seems very bewildering on days like these—full of contradiction and weariness—its meaning hidden. Perhaps they are sent to teach us a lesson of waiting, of trust in love beyond our knowledge, but not beyond our grasp, for we can *hold on* to it in the darkness, while we can do nothing more; and when the shadow passes our patience will turn to praise.

Perhaps they have another meaning too: to test our obedience to simple *duty*. Whether we will go on with the day's work because it is appointed, even when despondency whispers only of labour in vain and strength spent for nought. It is good, every now and then, to be stripped of all delight in the daily round, and made to pursue it because it is *right*. God's tenderness gives us generally so much pleasure in our work, it brings so truly its own great reward, that we hardly realize how much of mere

self-gratification there may be in it,—how little we are doing it *for Him*.

One other lesson, most precious, I have felt these days bring home; hardly a lesson either, but rather a remembrance of unutterable comfort: that the "Lord knoweth whereof we are made." Some good people are shocked at anything like depression without reason, and think you are very wicked to give way to it (knowing nothing, by the by, of the struggle which is not "giving way," but downright resistance). But He knows the reality of even unreasonable suffering,—that it is not to be brushed aside by mere effort of will, but often only to be borne and neither explained nor put down. He estimates causes by their effects, not general but special, and surely He does not chide us when we feel, in acute misery, what another would hardly notice.

However, we ought to be very patient with the non-comprehension of our neighbours in these matters. It is hard not to be irritated at it. But we are often vexed ourselves at what *we* do not understand; and we must remember that, to them, our atmospheric discomfort must seem the essence of childish weakness. We are slow to learn that we are all, more or less, sealed books to one another, in which are many pages we cannot read. But it is a great

gain when at last this knowledge dawns upon us;
when we are content to say of many things,—

“I speak to those that know
The thing whereof I speak,”

and to give up useless explanations to those that do not “know.” It is the greatest charm of social life, and almost the rarest, to meet a person of sufficient toleration and imagination to recognise this for others, and let them act upon it.

To come back to oneself, however, it is good to remember that sometimes those rainy days in one’s life,—I do not mean literal only, but figurative,—are as much to be traced to physical causes as headache or pleurisy. To many they come as the inevitable accompaniment of a certain temperament,—their inheritance for life, perhaps their cross. It may be modified by thoughtful training, but changed wholly it can never be. It is a great thing for anyone who possesses it to be aware of the fact: you know what ails you when the dark hours set in, and you can at least shut your lips and keep silence till they pass. Being miserable yourself, you need not make others so: you need not utter the morbid fears and suspicions which have laid hold of you like a veritable “possession;” at least you need not speak them to man, but you may tell them to God. Some outlet

you must have: let it be toward Him who understands all, and will strengthen you to endure.

Something, too, may be done towards preventing the darkness from setting in at all. It is generally the exhausted reaction of nervous energies which have been overdrawn; wherefore it becomes a clear duty to avoid all undue excitement,—all living at too high pressure: difficult, in these days, when stimulants, physical, mental, even spiritual, are taken in unsuspected and increasing doses. But if our lot is cast in the midst of certain dangers, we are not left without power to watch against and overcome them. We can keep a controlling hand upon ourselves, and prevent our being drifted into a whirl which will only sweep us on for three days to leave us uselessly stranded on the fourth, in the “used up” state of which all manner of nervous irritation and depression is the result. We can avoid all excess, whether in work, or study, or amusement; refusing to overdraw our powers, and exhaust in one week the force which would carry us steadily and equably through six. If we did this, I believe we should know less of unaccountable glooms and miseries, and be able even to go through the rainy days with some hope of brighter to follow.

WORK AND FAILURE.

I KNEW you would like Miss Lloyd, or I would not have asked her to call on you; and you have been struck by the very thing about her which always so strongly impresses me,—her freshness. She has a perpetual fountain of it within her, overflowing on other people. Her life is monotonous enough. I think it would make a machine of me, or else I should fret myself into a fever for the mere sake of variety: but she goes on through day after day of routine, neither worn, nor morbid, nor flat. I suppose the little spring down in our home-meadow would say the grass about it was always green; and it is the secret love in Annie's heart which for her makes the old duties ever new and sweet: she fulfils them "as unto the Lord," and takes each one afresh from Him; and this love opens for her all the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven. No wonder she is fresh, when the very roots of her being are fed by

Him who is as the dew unto Israel. The heart that leans on Christ keeps its childhood always: living in One Presence, the whole world is flooded for us with light. Small joys are sweet, as they were in our "angel-infancy," when we receive them there; and even small troubles lose their power to break our calm. Annie Lloyd always reminds me of that promise about the dew. Many deep thoughts are linked with it, but I have been dwelling most, lately, on that idea of freshness, which seems to *fit in* to a very real need. You know what it is to feel as if your spirit had grown dusty among the tiny fretting worries of your life? Hours will come when the spring of energy flags, when the most precious truths grow dim, when all the words you hear or speak of God, seem mere commonplaces,—flat, unreal. It is such joy to claim this promise then,—to plead for the dew and wait for it; going to God dry and withered, with scarcely strength even to look up, and to leave His Presence, rather feeling that we do *not* leave it, for that in all the "burden and heat of the day" we are "watered every moment." Then, when there are no gaps and broken spaces in our communion with the Father, there will be, in the dullest, most monotonous routine, in every lowly deed and common word, the power and the freshness of life.

And yet, on the other hand, perhaps this emblem of the dew enfolds one other bit of teaching. It does not fall in the sunshine. "The flowers need night's cool darkness, the moonlight and the dew." We may lose the *sense* of our Lord's nearness, though we cannot lose the reality. It is in such hours that faith has her "perfect work," and we "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." I think that, apart from carelessness and its inevitable chastening, there may be times when God would lead us into union with Himself, higher than we have known, by the discipline of apparent withdrawal. Perhaps, in earlier stages of our Christian life He gives us the joy of "feeling" to sustain our weakness, but, as we grow up to manhood, He will teach us to lean on nothing but Himself. In this sense also, it is true that "He must increase and we must decrease." Our enjoyment of Him must be made less, that He in all His glory may be more to us than He has ever been, and then in adoring gratitude and praise, we shall say rather "I am His," than "He is mine." We must learn too to be satisfied with giving Him just what He gives us, and if we cannot bring Him the eager fervency of our first love, we can give Him a faith which holds on to His word, and a yielded will, naked and helpless in its submission.

And this leads me, by a connection you may trace if you will though it does not lie on the surface, to another subject of your letter: your S. S. discouragements. The work was so joyful at first, and now it seems dull if not wearisome. It has been a history of failure too: your sowing was full of hope, but your hands are still empty of the sheaves you would have gathered for the Master. One thought perhaps, may help you: that all work for God must necessarily bring trial. There is double blessing linked with it: help for others,—or, if that may not be,—then discipline for ourselves. And if we are indeed “workers together with God,” then we do know that nothing in His husbandry is lost. If there is no seed for the garner, it may be that the fallen flower enriches the soil.

In any work that has to do with God’s Word, is not His promise our stay, that it “shall not return unto Him void”? I think the following sentences rebuke and lay bare one source of discouragement. “It shall accomplish that which *I* please: it shall prosper in that *whereto I sent it.*” Too often we expect it to do what *we* please; and if the exact result we have set our hearts upon does not follow, we are forthwith hopeless of any. Yet we cannot tell what may be the thing for which God has “sent it to prosper.” It may be to enter some human

soul, like one of the unseen impulses of spring, —silent, and for a while apparently inactive; but living and imparting life. Here again that word is true, "He that believeth shall not make haste." Faith can wait, content even in these things not to know *now* what God does, fully assured that it shall "know hereafter."

It is best for us, perhaps, not to look too much at our work *as a whole*, or to count on a certain issue of it. Our business is to bring the stones one by one and put them in their place. The building will grow we know not how, and in the end it may turn out to be different from our preconceived plan. But God's purpose has not failed. The success *we* thought of He may withhold, but only to give "some better thing."

And perhaps we do not enough remember that God appoints our service, not because *He* needs it, but because *we* need it.

"Though we fail indeed,
You,—I,—a score of such weak workers; He
Fails never. If He cannot work by us
He will work over us. Does He want a man,
Much less a woman, think you?"

No: but *we* need training, and He gives it thus, through lessons of failure, and, as we think, of loss.

And little we know for what it may be the preparation, in the restful work of that eternity wherein His "servants shall serve Him."

Nor will it be without result in the nearer future. Recollect those forty years in the life of Moses, spent at the "back-side of the desert." They began with the bitterness of disappointment. He had sought to help his people, and failed. The burden lay on his soul with a weight like death, but his attempt to lighten it had gone for nothing, except that it cut off all hope for the future. He needed the check. His unchastened eagerness might have wrought yet greater evil without it, and he would have missed the ripe calm wisdom, the steadfast hope, the strength born of self-distrust, which were the gift of that silent waiting alone with God. And what would the Exodus and the wilderness-journey have been without them?

"But I am not Moses," you will say, "and my work can never be like his." No: but in all lives, and in all duty there is something in common between highest and lowest. We need the same discipline for what we have to do, though it may be some humble work within the four walls of a Sunday-school, or only those of our home. For we too, make wrong beginnings, blunders, mistakes, and require, as well as he, to be kept back till we are ready to

go forward. With God there are no "small duties," and He grudges no pains to fit us for what, in our pride and blindness, we call such. And He would have us ready, "less to serve Him much than to please Him perfectly."

The deepest help of all lies in the remembrance of our identification with Christ. We are one with Him, personally—for, if we believe, we have received Him (John i. 12), we abide in Him (John xv. 4), we are His (1 Cor. iii. 23); and therefore we are one with Him *in purpose*,—to give "eternal life to as many as should believe on Him" (John xvii. 2), to "gather together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad." (John xi. 52.)

But yet for Him also there were times of restraining and waiting. He began His work at twelve years old,—but still He never hurried on events, but observed the fulness of time. "Mine hour is not yet come:" so He spoke once. Yet "when the time was come, He sat down and the twelve Apostles with Him." (Luke ix. 51 and xxii. 14.) He came as a servant to do God's will (Isa. xlii. 1; Psa. xl. 7, 8), and He bids us "learn of Him,"—for as "He is, so are we in this world." For us then, as for Him, there must be simple obedience. Let us remember *that*, and for all else let Him care.

Is not God's mighty plan for all this universe of

worlds like the design of some noble architect, completed when each lowly builder and joiner finishes his own task? Each stone laid in its place, each pillar and arch, each grove and moulding, a part of some one's living,—lived apart and alone, but brought together for one mighty whole at last. Meanwhile, we have each our own piece to do. We are only working, any of us, by a stone at a time. But there is beauty and completeness somewhere, and waiting.

TO AN INVALID.

(No. 1.)

So you are troubled by the wonderful things you hear of other invalids? I will not tell you that this is one of the many ways in which you may "disquiet yourself in vain," because you know it as well as I; and I remember too vividly how, in physical weakness, some "worrying" thought often fastens itself on the mind, with only greater persistence the more one strives to throw it off. It will speak, whether you listen or not: and I believe it is best to *let* it speak,—not to try and smother it; because you can hear it mutter, if it does not cry.

Certainly your friend's account of her new acquaintance is very striking. Five years on her back, in a darkened room, so that she can rarely work or read—and passes many wakeful nights—and yet she never feels the time long or lonely, as Jesus is always with her, and "how can she complain with such a Friend?"

One loves to thank God for His strength thus made perfect in weakness—for the tenderness which gives “songs in the night,” so sweet to hear. And yet while we know that to us also the same strength is open, and while we may and ought to be stimulated by an example so bright, we may, if we allow it to sadden us, come under St. Paul’s condemnation of those who, “measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” We are discouraged because of something we know; we forget how it may be modified by something we do *not* know.

For instance, though this case seems to be one of far greater suffering than yours, who are able to be out occasionally and even to bear a short drive, yet there may be one unthought of cause which makes your endurance something this lady has no idea of. A little more, a little less, of nervous susceptibility, a little difference in the *kind* of pain and its consequent power to depress,—you need nothing further to account for her sunshine, or your own too frequent clouds. She may be able to *think* during her hours of unemployed quiet; while, with you the interest of “something to do” is often all that keeps you, as you say, from “going half wild.” “How *can* you do so much?” I have now and then been asked in illness—“but then I suppose you don’t

suffer?" I could have replied, only I should not have been understood, that a certain kind of suffering can hardly be borne without "doing."

Or yet again, to take a contrasted phase of illness, you reproach yourself, and sometimes hear unmistakable hints from your friends that you might do more if you would. "Look at so and so: her sofa is the centre of a whole machinery. How such weak hands can keep it in motion is a marvel, but they do. Look at the letters she writes, at the sums she collects for different objects of charity. See how her talent for organization enables her to arrange work for others; how her wisdom counsels and her sympathy stimulates those who carry out what she originates. Or look at the wonders her needle accomplishes; how her skilled fingers charm money from pockets that will open to buy but not to give; while you,"—yes, you know how to fill up the blank. You lean back your head and sigh. How does she manage it all, while she must be carried from room to room; and you, who are able to walk round the garden or across the street to see a friend, have to lie for hours idle after you have written a note of two pages? Perhaps because she knows nothing of that one tender spot in the spine which answers with a dart of pain to every bend of the neck, every pressure of the fingers; perhaps,—but you need

not multiply "perhapses,"—they, after all, are not very profitable subjects of speculation. If you are doing what you can, then, whether or not your friends are satisfied, He who knows you best asks no more. And if you attempt to do what you cannot, under some idea of "making efforts," you are perhaps only indulging secret self-will; for you have learned by the past how such efforts end,—in reaction which brings on some one the trouble of extra nursing, and unfits you for even the little you can generally do. So that it is not quite clear whether God calls you to them, or only your own unsubmissive desire to struggle into activity which He for the present forbids.

No, dear L——, we must go back from these "weak reproaches full of self" to the thought of that *one Master,—our own,—*to whom we stand or fall: and He,—how one loves the remembrance!—"judges righteous judgment." Human friends cannot: to them one invalid is much like another. "She is confined to her bed or sofa, and she does so and so,—why cannot you?" And we ourselves misjudge also: how can it be otherwise? One eye alone can see differences which are real, under similarity which is only apparent. But we may look up to that, and if we meet approval there, why need we care if others fall on us coldly?

"Yes: I see all that," perhaps you will answer me; "and I do not care whether I am *doing* more or less: it is not my business to choose. But I cannot be always bright, as I hear some invalids are, and as I know I ought to be. *Feeling* surely is under control if not action."

Is it? To a certain extent, no doubt, and perhaps to a greater than we think; but there are limits to all possibilities, and in illness the end of some at least is reached very quickly; for in this warfare you fight at a disadvantage. Physical causes occasion depression, while they weaken your power to combat it. So there is a double difficulty: you "feel" wrong, and you are without certain important aids towards putting yourself right. For instance, *you*, I know, like many persons with active brain and vivid imagination, are dependent on variety. Does that seem a contradictory statement? It is true, like many another of which the same thing may be said. There are some who can live on through months and years of unvarying routine, and never find it weary. They need no outside "distraction" to break its monotony: they can go on *upon themselves* without interchanging ideas with a human creature. I do not mean the *full-minded* people, who have all they want within, and can use it; for to them also solitude is no loneliness: nor

yet the empty-minded, who cannot bear it at all; but rather the slow-minded, whose mental force never works hard or fast enough to weary itself. It does work so constantly that they do not know what ennui is, but in such quiet, plodding fashion that neither can they understand the exhaustion which sometimes makes you need the stimulus of another mind to keep your own going: nor have they ever felt an idea take hold of them with such overmastering force that it becomes for the time an actual "possession," from whose spell only another voice will bring freedom. "Very undisciplined," they would say: "*very*." The river which bears you onward *will* sometimes overflow, while the sluggish stream was never found in any unexpected channel.

And so it is, I think, that you long, though you call the longing weak, for some "change" in your day. A very slight one is enough; great ones, indeed, you could not bear. But some little break in the current of thinking and enduring you cannot help craving for, and if it does not come the struggle for sunshine is all the harder. A letter, a new book, a new pattern, a ten minutes' visit,—you are almost ashamed to confess what any of these have become to you, enough to beguile a long afternoon, which seems else interminable. Is it wrong to feel thus?

Surely not, if we strive against unsubmitive restlessness; if we take the cross of our will as a little bit of our Lord's loving discipline. How *can* we be disciplined, in fact, by what brings no smart? One would wonder how some persons benefit at all by trials which they never acknowledge to be such. We are to "rejoice in tribulation;" but how can we, if we never allow that we experience it? We are to be "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing;" but the joy is *in* the sorrow, so the sorrow must be felt. No: I cannot help feeling that if we confess to nothing in the fiery furnace but the light of it, we are either, without knowing it, *a little* unreal, or else are "striving to wind ourselves too high," etc. We are anxious to magnify God's sustaining grace, but He will always take care of that Himself; and it may well be that, in our exceeding jealousy for His glory, we are not without some remembrance of our own. Perhaps He is glorified in us most when we think least about it.

Therefore, to go back to the question which troubles you, do not be distressed because your invalid days are sometimes sad. In health the mere change of sight and sound which comes as we move from room to room, or, still further, in outdoor exercise, has more of an exhilarating influence than we know till we are deprived of it. But in illness the

same objects are always before you. You grow sick of their familiarity: they are so associated with suffering in the past that they bring up the remembrance of it to intensify that of the present. Hence the difficulty of getting away, so to speak, from yourself,—from the inexplicable nervous misery which seems at times too much for sense and strength to bear.

I know well that in all this I am touching only on outside difficulties. The sorest trouble of all is, that the one joy which should make you exceeding glad is so often "a fountain sealed." "He that has light within his own clear breast may sit in the centre and enjoy bright day." But if that light is clouded—

If it is clouded, dear one, God is calling you to a higher lesson in trusting Him *without* it. He knows how the clouds rise,—very often from that same nervous shattering which makes itself felt in many mysterious ways, not to be calculated on or accounted for. He knows how dark they seem: and do you think He does not *care*? Is He not touched with your drooping under them? Is not the "heaviness through manifold temptations" something to Him as well as to you? And yet, even though He is thus "pitiful and of tender mercy," He will not let you miss this training in *naked faith*, which is

to be one day "found" to His praise. Not joy, or brightness, or happy resting in great delight under His shadow,—not these you are to seek, or to be satisfied with; but Himself,—trusted through darkness, clung to through silence, when He seems to "answer not a word." He is teaching you to be willing to be stripped of all comfort, to lie bare before Him, with no happy thoughts, no thrills of conscious nearness. To be content, even when He deals with you thus, is perhaps the highest attainment of self-renunciation.

And for the rest, *leave the living of your life to Christ*. You are harassed and often cast down,—is it not because He does not wholly rule within? You have yet many rulers there,—man's opinion, man's estimate, whether your own or others, of what you ought to be and do. No wonder you are in bondage, not to say perplexity: but put all this aside, or rather ask Him to put it aside for you. Ask Him to take your *will* as He has taken your guilt,—to take you from yourself and make you wholly His. If you mean the asking you will get the answer. His life will fill and satisfy you. You will rest, because He *plans* for you, and you need have no difficulties about doing this and not doing that. If you are to work, His power will give you strength and wisdom and words; if you are to be

still, you will feel that He *gives* you the stillness. It will be no burden on your conscience, because it is His choice.

One thought struck me the other day as full of comfort for the suffering members,—that as the whole body is “compact” by that which every joint supplieth, and each part is to be a separate manifestation of the varied beauty of the whole,—Christ; so some members must be made like to one aspect of the life of Jesus and some to another. It must be as much an “office” then as any other, to be brought specially into fellowship with His sufferings; for without such joints the whole body could not be “compact.”

My letter is too long, or there is yet much I would gladly say. Perhaps some day you shall have another, if you care for it.

TO AN INVALID.

(No. 2.)

So my letter requires a supplement: it is "too full of soothing." Then you shall have the other,—the danger-side; perhaps a glimpse of the duty-side also.

One temptation, do you not feel it, of a life in which the body demands much thought and time, is self-indulgence. It is difficult to distinguish between necessary and undue care, between a rash persistence in efforts, and an indolent refusal to make them. From this latter many invalids suffer, even physically. They have grown so accustomed to the hopeless, "I can't do so and so," that the unused power gradually fails; the fancied impossibility becomes real. It is better, in spite of fatigue and temporary suffering, to persist steadily in any exertion which medical advice does not forbid. Of course, if it increases illness, or retards recovery, thus entailing trouble on friends, it must be given up; but, short of this, it

will do good and not harm. It may often be very difficult. There are times when a removal to the sofa seems a sort of North-West passage; when the announcement of a visitor tempts the immediate, "Oh, I'm too tired to see any one;" and yet neither transit nor visit would injure,—would more probably brace and refresh. We shall be "glad of them afterwards;" more glad still, in days to come, when we look back and see how, by God's blessing, the steady struggle not to give in has saved us from hopeless helpless weakness. We can do more for ourselves in this matter than any doctor can do for us. The battle is very much in our own hands, and in the strength of our own will, as it leans on power given even for such need to the faint, lies the victory.

It is a good rule to try and dispense with any indulgence we do not positively require. "Fancies" about food, or noise, or light, are better striven against if possible. They grow and multiply with most curious rapidity, silently gaining ground which they do not readily give back. And the more we withdraw ourselves from the ordinary home-life around us, the harder it becomes to bridge over the space which separates us from it. Wherefore, in so far as we can "make believe" to be well, let us do so.

Difficult! I have learned something of the cost

of my counsel, but I do not shrink from it notwithstanding. I know how the eager discussion confuses one's brain,—how the sound of voices seems often to fall on a raw nerve,—how the constant coming and going reduces to the last point of irritated weariness. But, if it can be borne without real harm, better all this for some part of every day, than the luxurious quiet of one room, with its shutting in and shutting out. Shaded light is very pleasant, but you may live in it till neither mind nor body will bear free healthy sunshine.

There is another point wherein we have need of watchfulness. Do you remember what is said of Dr. Arnold's sister, in the brief notices of her which are scattered here and there through his life,—a record of "suffering affliction and patience" which contrasts strangely with his stirring activity: that she "made it a rule never to speak of herself." I must say, I hope she transgressed the rule occasionally, for it was undoubtedly a little strained; but it is wonderful how one glides into the habit of dwelling on and in one's own little world, instead of leaving it to sympathize heartily with others. It is a strong temptation, often a relief, to pour the chronicle of daily pain and discomfort into the first kindly ears that will listen, and thus the hour of a friend's visit becomes so full of "I" and "me," that

"you" and "your's" cannot get in edgeways. You do not know how much this is the case till you are suddenly wakened up to see it. You may grieve over it in others and never dream of it in yourself, so unconsciously are the chains of an evil habit riveted. We have much need of prayer that God may keep us from the wrong we do not suspect, may show us the unguarded place we had not thought of watching.

Especially, in long illness, should we cry mightily that the power of God's grace may keep down the exacting spirit which is so unlovely in many invalids. Constant little requirements of service or companionship make up a whole which even tenderest love must feel a burden, though it is borne in uncomplaining patience. Better, instead of giving way to the imperative, "I must have so and so"—to train oneself to say, "I can do without it." And it is astonishing of how many things you will learn this to be true if you steadily put the thought of another's trouble first and of your own comfort second.

Then again: I feel very strongly the evil of supposing that, because we cannot do this or that we can therefore do nothing. Many invalids can testify how the weakness they are willing for God to use, is made strong by Him as the hour of need comes

round, and, though anything like regular engagements may be impossible, there are always fragments of work which the Master will send as they are watched and prayed for. The young servant who waits on you at the sea-side lodging, with whom your very helplessness brings you into closer contact, can you not tell her of the Friend who helps you to bear your suffering? She may be even now on the brink of some terrible temptation: can you not speak the warning word to save her? Or the girls in your own rank,—the young things who are some of them linked to you by ties of kindred,—have you no message for them? They have perplexities, which the memory of your own girlhood may help you to understand, and the very fact of your being found quiet in one place, may prompt them to turn to you for help rather than to busier friends. Could you not gather two or three of them beside your sofa for a Bible reading, or give half an hour for a talk with one alone? And if they float away beyond your reach, a pencil note may be treasured more than you know, and made, by Him who uses weak things, a link in the chain to draw them to Himself.

And then, may not the sufferers specially glorify their Master before those who know Him not? It is not only that He gathers for Himself the fruit of

love and joy and peace, but its beauty is to be visible in other eyes. Are not the bright look, the meek endurance, the struggle against the small selfishnesses of invalidism, telling, though silent witnesses, for Christ's sustaining power? Do you think the young creatures, whose merry words and fresh exuberance now and then stir your quiet, do not feel as they leave you, that, spite of the pain they pity, there is peace they envy? And is it not worth something, even at cost of after weariness, so to have thrown yourself into their plans and pleasures, that the heart, at leisure from its own suffering, has touched theirs with yearnings to share its rest?

You must not think you are "only a cumberer," dear friend. If the thought is true, it is your own fault; but in your case I do not think it is. I would rather bid you remember that you have your own ministry; you have many companions in tribulation who are stronger for your struggles, calmed by your quiet patience. And down where the fields are white and the reapers are weary, your prayers bring many a cup of cold water, which, though you never know how it is welcomed, shall in no wise lose its reward.

Most of all He has need of you whose power can rest on your infirmities and use them for His own

glory. It is not, after all, the friend who is constantly trying to do something for us who is nearest and dearest in our love, but the one who comes closest in heart-communion; and it is for this your Lord calls you apart into the desert which He makes glad. He gives you a place of honour near Him, where few voices are heard but His. Enough for you to lie and listen, till in His own time, He bring you out into a "wealthy place," where you may speak in the light what you have learned in the still darkness. And if that may not be here, there is a yet wealthier place in His kingdom of rest, where service may be awaiting you, for which you are training now. **"HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM" THERE.**

One phase of service, I need not remind you, may have its special manifestation in suffering,—our glorifying God by meek submission. There is something yet higher,—the joy which not only does not murmur, but even triumphs, under chastening; which can sing on its unfaltering song, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." God's grace is sufficient to lift us even to this,—why should we doubt it? Why should we not plead for it, and, pleading, expect it? But if, looking onwards to this glorious

goal, we can only feel that we have "not attained,"—let us at least try to keep down all restless questioning and repining, and, even as we have "received good" so also to "receive evil." It is not easy. "One cannot always be at concert pitch when one is ill." No: but we may strive for it. We must do so, or trial will not yield the "peaceable fruits" for which it is sent. It brings a message for our self-will, that it grieves and dishonours Him who would reign wholly within us. He has a contest with it. Shall we work with Him, or, by our resistance, make the struggle longer and harder?

To go back once more to the subject of "efforts," I am tempted, as a postscript to my letter to add a passage I have just read on one of our Lord's miracles of healing,—the cure of the impotent man at Bethesda.

"The man knows nothing about Him, and He makes no demand upon his faith except that of obedience. He gives Him something to do at once. He will find him again by and by. The man obeys—takes up his bed and walks. He sets an open path before us: *we* must walk in it. More, we must be willing to believe that the path is open,—that *we* have strength to walk in it. God's gift glides into man's choice. It is needful that we should follow with our effort in the track of His foregoing power:

to refuse is to destroy the gift. His care is not for such as choose to be invalids: they must be willing to be made whole, even though it should involve the carrying of their bed and walking. Some keep in bed who have strength enough to get up and walk. There is a self-care and a self-pity, a laziness and conceit of incapacity, which are as unhealing to the body as they are unhealthy to the mind, corrupting all dignity and destroying all sympathy. Who but invalids need like miracles wrought in them? Yet some invalids are not cured because they will not be healed. They will not stretch out the hand; they will not rise; they will not walk; above all things they will not work. Yet for their illness it may be that the work so detested is the only cure; or, if no cure, yet the best amelioration. Labour is not in itself an evil like the sickness, but often a divine, a blissful remedy. Nor is the duty or the advantage confined to those who ought to labour for their own support. No amount of wealth sets one free from the obligation to work, in a world, the God of which is ever working.

“But there is a class of persons the very opposite of these, who, as extremes meet, fall into a similar fault. They will not be healed either. They will not take the repose which God giveth to His beloved. Some sicknesses are to be cured with rest,

others with labour. The right way is all,—to meet the sickness as God would have it met, to submit or to resist according to the conditions of cure. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and she who will not go to her couch and rest in the Lord is to blame, even as she who will not rise and go to her work.”

OPINIONS.

YOUR letter, with its vehement assertions, reminds me somewhat of the state of matters ecclesiastical in this curious little town. You know we have a good deal of the clerical element among us, with, it must be confessed, no small amount of theological fencing and wrangling and exclusiveness, of vigorous setting up of party standards, and no less vigorous pulling of them down. There are of course the three recognized sections of the Church of England, each maintaining that the other two are wrong and the authors of wrong; doing more harm than good in the world, or else neutralizing the good by the harm: so that, upon *its own* showing, the Church altogether is not doing very much in the world, being at any rate not so bright and burning a light as it might be. First of all we have Ritualism, as represented by St. Kentigern's, its incumbent, a noble, self-denying man, with some mysticism tinging his keen spiritual sense, and a

firm hold, through all symbolism, of the thing symbolized: caring only for the symbols indeed, for the sake of the truth which he believes them to shadow forth. A man more liked by the poor than the rich; being austere and reserved in manner, and having small sympathy with his fashionable congregation, whose unreasoning love for ceremonial *as such* he holds in check as well as he can, though having once encouraged it he finds this a rather delicate task. As for his curates, with their chatter of copes and chasubles, their devotion to croquet and flirtation, and their incoherent gabbling over the holy words which they make it an article of salvation to repeat daily,—perhaps the less said of them the better.

Then we have the St. John's congregation, who make no genuflexions, groan under bad music, by way of protest against surpliced choristers, and delight greatly in declamatory sermons which never reach the ears of those declaimed against. Honest and earnest people they are, perhaps slow to believe that truth has many sides, of which the greater number can hardly be commanded by the same organs of vision, but still doing most of the hard work which is done at all; and so faithful and conscientious in what they think right, that we must forgive them some want of charity towards those they deem wrong.

Upon these two alike, the Broad Church, as represented by the College masters and a good many thoughtful men associated with them, look down with kindly, if rather lofty indifference,—not holding positive truth so firmly themselves, that they should be much ruffled by claims to exclusive possession of it in others.

And surging outside and around all three is the tide of dissent,—Nonconformist, Wesleyan, Baptist, etc., etc.,—a tide strong and rising, and not like to be stayed in its flow by much respect for establishments, ecclesiastical or other. Its ministers meet on platforms with their “dear Evangelical brethren” of the Church, to exchange such demonstrative expressions of affection, that one wonders whether they would say so much if they felt more. Yet their’s was the energy which in time past thrilled a sleeping land, and woke her to a new and deeper life. And their’s is the love which since then has plunged into many a depth with the lever of a simply preached Gospel, and lifted many a sunken one into purity and light. Sometimes scowled at, sometimes politely ignored by the Church which should have recognized them as her friends, as doers of work she left too long neglected; still they have held on their way till, now: the gulf they were not first to make they do not greatly care to cross, except as they bide their

time for a day that is coming, when it will be bridged by energy not altogether peaceful in its aim.

And on these His children—for some there are among them all—on their pride and strife and pettiness, their contradictions and assertions and depreciations, surely their Father in heaven looks down; waiting, with tender patience, for the day when they shall understand each other, as He understands them even now.

But for you, dear Clara, I have one fear: shall I tell it you? That you are in danger of making up your opinions into bundles, "sorted," as the Scotch say, and so tied up that they will admit none of the new facts or influences life may have in store. You are beginning almost to fear these, lest they should disturb the symmetry and perfection of your arrangements. But do strive,—and pray that you may strive still harder,—not to lose your sympathy with truth, however it may present itself; not to shrink, though it brings you the trouble of pulling down from your mental shelves a good deal which you had put away there, complete, as you thought, and comfortable. It is an unpleasant process, involving a measure of temporary confusion. Just as you cannot, without a good deal of dust-raising and some despair of ever getting things right again, go into a closed room and open its stores to sunshine and west wind. But they

are healthful influences nevertheless. Would it be wise to shut them out?

You will not think I am counselling restlessness, and say, Have sympathy with truth. I do not say that speculation and truth are identical, or that systems of human thought are to be received as of equal worth with God's revelation. Nor again, should I think it wise, while you do not exclude light from any quarter whence it may come, for you to go about seeking what may only trouble that which you have already. Here, as ever, there is danger on this side and on that; either in undue clinging to the old, or undue eagerness for the new: the one, unchecked, ends in superstition, the other in scepticism. But, in measure, we need both. Holding fast the "faith once delivered," let us add to our faith knowledge. Keeping to our childhood's teaching of creed and catechism, let us welcome what may have grown since, out of wider study and more enlarged thought.

I know there is something to be said on the other side. It is true that those who do not see very far, are sometimes clearer in sight and more decisive in action than those whose vision ranges further. In these latter the process of balancing leads to a species of uncertainty. In their sight of some distant benefit, they overlook the small but certain gain of the present; while the practical people who

objure theories, at least do the bit of good which lies under their hands, and mend the road before their own door. Well, I suppose the world has need of both, and work for them too. Each class owes much to the other, and, to whichever we belong, it is well to study excellences which are not our own. Which I now advise for *you*.

Remember, too, that early youth is hardly the time for the formation of opinions. It is life in a state of productive and changeful progress, wherein new impressions and ideas crowd upon us before the old ones have been regulated. We must wait for clearness and repose, for the ripening and balancing of developed powers, before we pronounce decisively on subjects touching which the wisest hold their judgment in suspense. One most valuable mental quality is the patience which can wait; not restless under uncertainty, but calmly enduring it till the time for its removal has come.

You have much to do meanwhile. If I say to you, Suspend your judgment, I say also, no less earnestly, Try to prepare yourself for judging, both by accumulating materials for thought, and by training your mind to work upon them. We women have too little done for us, educationally, in this matter. We are accused of "jumping at conclusions" and "arguing from hypothesis," but it is rather hard

measure to be scolded for faults we are not taught either to detect or amend. True, indeed, that there is not one woman in a hundred who can reason or appreciate reasoning,—who has patience and fairness enough to compare and weigh evidence on any given question, or power to hold in abeyance her own crude and inconsequent decisions, while she changes her mental stand-point and looks at the other side. True all this, and the greater the pity: but is the fault all at our door?

But I must not wander into another field, tempting as it is; I wish only to show you that we who have only received an ordinary girls' education, in the very narrow sense of that term as it is used at present, have much to do for ourselves in supplementing its deficiencies. We can go back and lay the foundation deeper; we can widen and strengthen it by adding what has been omitted; we can exercise the "judicial faculty;" we can train ourselves in concentration and reflection, in analysis and synthesis, in observation and comparison; we can learn to combine facts and deduce principles; we can accustom ourselves, above all, to greater accuracy of thought and speech, to habits of closer attention, more patient and candid research. And, to sum up much, if rather roughly, we can educate ourselves in Butler's *Analogy*.

Of course, to do all this, we must leave a good deal undone. We must wage war, first and last, with the modern habit of multifarious reading. Do you remember what Robertson says of it: that it "weakens the mind more than anything else,—more than doing nothing,—for it becomes a necessity at last, like smoking, and is an excuse for the mind to lie dormant whilst thought is poured in, and runs through, a clear stream, over unproductive gravel, in which not even mosses grow." But to set oneself against it requires no inconsiderable effort. Tempting books come in from the library,—periodicals multiply like mushrooms,—pamphlets, reviews, newspapers, all demand time if not thought. "Have you seen so and so? Oh, you must read that! It is very short, you'll soon skim it through;" this one hears perpetually, and it is difficult to resist the pressure, and plod steadily through an old book which will yield nothing to skimming, instead of dipping here and there into a new one which you can discuss at the next dinner party. Yet thus is formed a habit of skimming, destructive to mental force, and thoroughly paralysing to mental growth. "The art of judicious skipping" has undoubtedly its use, but it may be acquired too dear.

"But one must keep up with the thought of the day: it will not do to drop behind the stream."

Possibly, though it is a stream that may drift us out into a wide and uncertain sea. But I do not forget what I said just now about keeping the mind open to new impulses,—cultivating sympathy with new phases of truth. I only wish to impress on you the need of having always on hand some one book which requires absolute *study*,—which is worth reading and re-reading—marking and inwardly digesting. If you will do this, keeping to it steadily for half an hour or an hour daily, giving it your whole mind for the time and dwelling on it afterwards, you may safely be trusted to skim as much as you like beside; provided always that you do it *for a purpose*,—not merely to get rid of time. You may skim to share the interest of a friend, or as needed recreation after mental work, or to find an illustration for a Sunday class; and there is hardly any field, by the by, in which you may not glean for the Master, unless such as you have no business to enter. But,—forgive my repetition,—your “study-book” must be a book to be studied. I do not say merely a good book, which, read without effort, no possible effort can recall, because there is nothing in it for memory to lay hold of. There are scores of books, excellent in the opinion of some judges, or at least with “no harm” in them, of which I should like to clear many a drawing-room table, because they *do* harm, and

that deeper than their readers dream; for the good in them has no force in it, living and communicating life: it is all negative, if such a thing can be. They are "faultily faultless," having neither savour nor salt. They are unnatural: the light in them never shone on sea or sky in any world of every-day living. And they are the more hurtful, because their religious tone disguises the mischief they work. The mind glides inert through their pages, soothed against any fear of wasted time by the "reflections" which recur here and there (very generally skipped, however, being introduced by some formula which is equivalent to, "Now you may go, while I preach"). And there is no suspicion,—so pleasant, so apparently healthful is the draught,—that, if not poisoned, it is at least fatally enervating. It would be hard to turn from such milk and water diet to any stronger food.

“PROGRESS.”

THIS is an age of progress, you tell me, and the religious teaching which satisfied our forefathers must be expanded and remodelled for their children. Every branch of human knowledge feels and obeys the impulse of some progressive influence. Old fields of inquiry yield fresh stores, and new ones are being daily opened to stimulate investigation. Ideas change,—thoughts widen,—we, our whole selves, are borne onward, for good or evil, with the course of time: must not religion also be progressive,—susceptible of new developments? Is the New Testament to be the limit of its growth? Do we not see, even within that very Book, some gradual unfolding of Christian doctrine: is it not destined to unfold still? Do we embrace, even yet, the completed circle of Christian faith? Or may we not go even further, and say that, though Christianity was no doubt a stage in the world's education, yet surely it is not its final goal. It brought us light, indeed; but has not the light so brightened and

broadened that we can afford now to dispense with that which introduced it?

I hardly know how to answer you, because I fear to damage a good cause by unworthy advocacy; and, for myself, I would almost rather give you no reply than that one line of Tennyson,—

“I cannot understand, I love.”

But I do not expect this to content another. Only remember that, if what I say fails to satisfy you, there is much which others can say better.

“But this Gospel: is it not after all an old, old story? Do we not leave it behind, like others of the earlier world?”

I think not: for consider what it professes to be. It announces something done. It proclaims also certain facts, which bear a twofold aspect. They declare man's position with regard to God, and God's mind as regards man: both are unchangeable. “God is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of man that He should repent.” And human nature is from age to age the same: therefore the relation between the two is unvaried, and the Gospel cannot be superseded. Any revelation from God to man (I assume, of course, the possibility of such) must bear directly on these two facts, and hence cannot be susceptible of change.

You say that the Revelation itself was progressive. True: but that which was revealed was essentially and absolutely the same. The Divine plan was unfolded through a gradual development of historical facts, but the truths underlying these are identical.

Then again: "What do you mean by 'the Gospel'?" It is a vague term, admitting no exact definition." Well, I will give you St. Paul's Gospel to the Corinthians: the brief creed in which he sums up what he at least held to be the essential points of Christian teaching.

"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day." (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.)

The central fact which he had to deliver to mankind was this; which fact touched the relation between God and man, and entirely changed it; for it was God's message to man, revealing His love. It dealt with the sin which separated between the Creator and the creature, and abolished it. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and, through Him, God can still be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth. This is what St. Paul understood by "the Gospel." It might be more, but it was always this.

I go back then to my point,—that, unless God is

changed, unless human nature is changed, the death of Christ must have exactly the same influence on the condition of mankind that it ever had. The first supposition is absurd; and, as to the second, the heart of man is as much enmity against God now as it ever was. Who shall be the Reconciler, making both one? The New Testament gives the answer; and, until God Himself reveals some other, we must regard it as final. For, if the death of Christ was God's appointed and designed means of dealing with and destroying sin, then this His appointment must inevitably stand till He changes it.

Still, it hardly satisfies me to reason thus with you; for I know that my arguments will not reach your real need. I would rather remind you that you possess the power of testing this revelation which you gainsay: but then you must test it by experiment. There is disorder within you,—want within you: God has provided a remedy for both. Do not reject it till you have found it fail: accept it as *His*, and its efficacy shall be attested by its effects. “He that believeth hath the witness in Himself:” but only “he that believeth.” The doubter will listen for its voice in vain. I cannot prove to you that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin; but believe it, and His cross shall be its own proof. You will recognise it as God's solution of the world's

mystery ; nay more, as the explainer and reconciler of your own inner world. Believe it, and you shall know that it is so by the destruction of sin's power within, and by the peace it brings—"higher than all thought—deeper than all sorrow."

One thing remember : you cannot live upon negations. Both mind and heart require to be sustained by positive truth. And you may be assured that in all the dogmas and formulas you quarrel with as worn out and obsolete, there is some seed of living truth, which if you have not discovered, you do not even understand the questions you are trying to solve.

CONFESSION AND RESTORATION.

I HAVE been much struck to-day with that expression in Hosea xiv.: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Israel had fallen by iniquity: it must be confessed and put away before they could be restored. God brings it into the light, and He tells them to bring it into the light too: *Take with you words.* I think there is a great deal of help in that command about the way of return to God when we have wandered from Him. We are often conscious that there is something between our soul and Him, but we will not acknowledge it. We do not "take with us words," and acknowledge in His presence: we shelter ourselves in a general idea that, as He knows it, we need not tell Him. And it is easier, much easier, to ask forgiveness than to say why we need it. There is something very humbling in that: we do not like it; our pride shrinks. You know how frequently, when a child has done wrong, a parent has a contest with its self-will

before it will confess the wrong. It is quite ready to ask forgiveness, but to go further and confess is too much. I believe it is to this very point that God will bring us,—confession; for then we are thoroughly humbled and broken, and the contrite spirit is ready for the balm of forgiving love. Without confession there is something hard left.

I suppose we have all known, at one time or other, what it is to have something in our hearts which we dare not look at,—something that lies, palpitating and living, under the heap of restless thoughts with which we try to hide and smother it. We will not put the thoughts aside: what cowers beneath, it is more comfortable to screen from sight. And so we go on, for weeks and months, keeping *ourselves* out of the focus of our own scrutiny, and yet holding down a hidden consciousness which now and then wakes into troublesome activity.

It is possible, I suppose, to feel the dragging of a chain, and yet not to have power to will it broken; possible to see it, lowering, degrading, eating out with deadly rust all vitality of spiritual being,—and yet to cling to it. What its links are we know: and God. Others, even if they knew, might see nothing in them; on our neighbour's conscience, holier far perhaps than we, they might lie with no weight of guilt: but that is no question for us. Enough, that

they make prayer a form and the Bible a mere collection of sacred documents. And yet, all the while, we go about our work and thrust this terrible reality away from us. In naked fact, we are living a lie; but that is an unpleasant admission, not to be made in words,—only felt, down in depths where words do not come.

Can this be, you ask, for one who is a child of God? Yes: I think it may, though one can only bear to acknowledge it with faith's grasp firm upon the assurance, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." But I am sure the only help in such a state is, to "take with us words" and go to God. Half the evil lies in its being unacknowledged. If we *looked* we should see: what we turn aside from, it is easy to ignore. But, when we tell all to our Father, we must make *ourselves* hear; and surely He who is "greater than our hearts" has given this command for our sakes. He would bring us face to face with our own vileness and loathsomeness. So, only, will the cry go up to Him, real at last in its soul-agony, "Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me whole."

Still, again and again comes the shrinking and the fear and the falling. "I cannot give up: this one thing, I cannot." No: we cannot. But we can pray, "Lord make me: give me the *will* to ask

Thee to put it from me. I hardly know whether or not I do wish it gone: I can only throw myself on Thee to have the wish infused. Only help me: Thou knowest how,"—and help will come. The spell will be broken: the faint longing for deliverance will grow stronger; it will rise like a tide, sweeping away all that now keeps it down,—will rise till it joins itself to everlasting strength, and liberty is once more proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison to him that is bound.

"He restoreth my soul." It is a true word, enfolding within it many a secret of God's dealing with His children. The "restoring" may not come in the way of comforting, at least not its first stages; it may be rather through sharp discipline, whether by a heavy stroke or a "scourge of small cords." Suffering is not always, nor necessarily penal. For others, I think, we should be very careful of viewing it in that aspect; but for ourselves it is hardly well to put down altogether the consciousness which, *if we would let it speak*, often connects chastening with declension in holiness. We have suffered sin upon our souls, and we know it. We have not been dealing openly with our Lord: something there has been which we have tried to hide from His sight. "Search me, oh Lord, and try me,"—this has been our prayer; but we would rather He should

not take us at our word. Yet He has done it, in love too tender to be ever unfaithful. What we have not told Him, He will tell us,—in speech which cuts deep. And so He will bring us to acknowledge our transgression, with tears perhaps; but tears it is good to shed. And then He “heals our backslidings.” If we confess—He is faithful and just to forgive. So—He restoreth.

The end of the verse gives us the result of the confession and the restoring: “So will we render the calves of our lips.” The idea seems taken from the offering of sacrifice. God asks from us now no gift of lamb or bullock, but He does require from each of His people their testimony that they are His. Here we come to the word “confession” in another sense. (Matt. x. 32; Rom. x. 9.) And this confession can never be what it ought—clear, bold decided—so long as we know that there is sin between us and God. It is only when we are walking in the daylight, not afraid to look up to our Father, that we can speak for Him. Sin within there always must be, but unless our conscience witness that it is sin resisted, not indulged, our lips must be sealed. May not this be one reason why we often find it hard to speak for God? Our very words condemn us: no wonder that they die upon our lips. We know, and we feel God knows, that our hearts are

not whole with Him. I think this same lesson is taught in Luke xii. Our Lord is there specially addressing the disciples, and His first warning to them is against "hypocrisy," which seems to include every form of unreality. Afterwards, and in close connection, He passes on in the eighth verse: "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

LIVES THAT GO ON.

THIS is one of the resting-times of life, and I am tired enough to be glad of it; tired, somewhat, of my fellow-creatures, and not greatly caring to see any of them: a state of mind I do not excuse, nor yet very earnestly contend against. We are happy together,—Maggie Leicester and I,—she being for the present the one fellow-creature of whom I am not tired. But then we do not see too much of one another, our intimacy having reached the happy stage in which we are free to stay in separate rooms for half a day, or to sit in the same, even at work, without exchanging a word.

Of these same rooms there is something to be said. Lodgings in general are a trial to me: it is not so much that I object to having my best “things” crumpled into tiny drawers, or my first sleep disturbed by the “party below” returning from an evening entertainment; but any small sense of beauty I possess is so continually shocked, that I wish I could

reserve it for my walks abroad, and put it away when I am in the house. Fancy my dismay when I entered our little drawing-room, to see a green drugget, blue table-cloth, yellow-covered chairs and sofa! On the mantel-piece were sundry specimens of art in china, beside photographs of our landlady's six children,—and on the walls were engravings, from the Illustrated, of the Duke of Wellington's funeral. Maggie laughed at my blank look, but she possesses that "mysterious happiness of touch" by which so much may be made of unpromising materials. Her fingers know how to charm some hidden power of comfort or beauty out of lurking-places where no one but herself would look for it; and so, when she had flitted about a minute or too, arranged the flowers we brought from home, disposed our few books, ink-stand and work-baskets, and respectfully placed some of the ornaments in the closet, I was amazed to see that the room had lost half its ugliness, and really looked, if one could not say elegant, still "not so bad after all."

We have a good many talks, however, and I will try to gather up for your benefit the broken threads of one or two, which touched on subjects you and I have often discussed. This morning, after our usual penance of water-drinking, we sat for a delightful hour in some shady gardens near. A fountain

splashed beside us, the bees hummed in the sunshine, the brown chestnuts shone on the ground near their gleaming white shells. A fresh wind came singing up the valley; it had lowered the corn as it passed, and now it stirred the beech-leaves and brought them in a down-pour of gold upon the green. A dappled sky was overhead, and the soft haze of October melted and wreathed in the distance. We watched it—neither of us inclined to read.

"What are you thinking?" I asked Maggie, at last, after some study of her changeful face.

"Of lives that go on," she replied.

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I can't tell how I came upon the thought,—yes, perhaps I can: but that does not matter. But you know how, in books, you read episodes in a life, beautifully rounded off and finished. The story ends—complete in itself: there are no tangled, straggling threads, that are not taken up into the pattern of it, left floating in space attached to nothing. But it is not so in reality: the story of a life is over, but the life itself goes on."

"I have often thought of that," I replied; "but it is not all dreariness. In a woman's life, at any rate, there are two sides,—perhaps more, but these at least. There are longings and askings, never to be satisfied; there are moments when we hold our breath and

live,—when our souls palpitate in intensity of joy or pain. And there are days, weeks, years, when, as you say, we *go on*; not getting all our hearts might hold, but content with what comes to them: some homely comfort—something that must be “done next.” There is a part of us that settles down into these with a certain sort of rest, willing to wait and ask for no more, yet knowing of something that might have been ours though we have missed it. In one way it may seem a sort of descent, this contentment, from what is more elevated and elevating; but we may as well confess to it; we are women after all, and we could not bear to be constantly wound up to our highest pitch. I do not believe that the strongest-minded of us will not occasionally turn from the most abstruse book, or the noblest imaginations, to the attraction of a needle and thread. And we learn to be glad in simple, every-day joys, and honestly interested in every-day duties. They have a wonderfully sedative effect, happily for those whose lot lies among them.”

“Yes, I know,” said Maggie smiling; “and I suppose it must be thus that many women who have gone through a great deal and left it behind them, or else are waiting, patiently as they may, for something which lies before,—can yet keep half of their being down, so to speak, and live on with the other.”

"Yes: and so it is that there are unsuspected histories, folded away, or still to unfold, in lives which seem from the outside as common-place as they well can be; and I think this should make us very tender, very pitiful in our judgments. The sudden lifting of a veil, years ago, would explain, if we knew it, the suspicious bitterness of to day. The shock which dislocated mind and body would explain the nervous irritation we are apt to condemn as mere want of self-control. We see the hardening, or the sharpening which circumstances have wrought in their slow grinding pressure, and we cannot tell what softened, rounded grace of soul might have bloomed out from other influences. Ah well, God knows!

"But the 'days go on,' as Mrs. Browning says, and though these things remain, the pain of their beginning has worn itself away. But of course all this is outside the highest source of comfort. Even the faintest reflection of the peace of God will keep the heart warm,—how much more that full measure of it which He gives, even here, to those who will receive it!"

"Yes," said Maggie, answering me with her eyes on the far-away distance; "here many such lives are going on around us—narrow they seem, to look at, and not over bright,—but I suppose if they are overshadowed they are also sheltered; like a brook that

flows through woodland depths, the sun doesn't often reach them, neither does the storm, but now and then they lie open to the blue, and give back its peace."

"I don't know about that: its a pretty simile, but I'm a very matter-of-fact person, as you ought by this time to have learned. I do believe, however, that no life need be desolate which is capable in some lowly fashion, of being helpful; for other lives go on too: there is always some thing, or body, to think of and care for. Look at your Aunt Gertrude, for instance, what a blessing she is! just one of the sweet simple-hearted women of whom the world doesn't take much notice till they leave it, and then it finds out how much they have done; one among many, that are first and best to no one, but who yet go on their way brightly and cheerfully, earning the highest praise, that home would not be home without them."

"Ah, and perhaps it is only through pain that this power of helpfulness comes. We can hardly learn, without it, how to discern deeply, to influence strongly and wisely. Perhaps some things may be waiting for us in the years to come, for which we are having a long education."

"Yes: and perhaps too, we get most of our education in the days that go on. There mayn't be much in them,—this or that as it happens; but

there is life, which works on, through slight outward seeming."

But here we became conscious of a chill and darkening in the day. There was a black cloud overhead, and already a soft whisk of raindrops among the leaves ; we had to run for home, and reached it barely in time to escape a wetting ; and all afternoon the rain continued. We gave ourselves up to writing letters, watching at intervals the piles of grey cloud as they shifted and broke and gathered again, while the mist-robe wreathed itself about the hills, and the wind sighed, as it only does in autumn, with a sort of wistful grieving over the falling year. Towards evening the sky cleared ; some points of higher ground caught a gleam from the horizon, and lay in golden green light, and now and then a bit of brightness strayed down to the shiny roofs and fair freshened fields below ; but still it was too damp to venture out. We sate and drank our tea half idly, and speculated on our fellow-lodgers, next door and opposite. It is curious how unconsciously one drops into this habit at a watering-place,—watching arrivals and departures, looking in at uncurtained windows, and getting imaginary peeps into hearts,—weaving histories, and hopes, and fears,—even sending out ventures of love and pity for those whose very names and voices one may never care to know. Some natures are

always given to this borrowing from the lives around them, gathering to themselves what they may of kindred in this wide world, where all are brothers; a tendency which, on its wrong side, degenerates, I suppose, into gossip.

My own thoughts, indeed, needed not to stray further than to Maggie's face for a story sad enough to occupy them. Not an uncommon story: the brief outlines would be easily written, and yet others like them hold crystallised the tale of many a life. A tale of waiting, and then of loss; the waiting a slow dying of heart, the loss a blow to the quick. Her's is a strong nature, and she suffered in proportion to its strength. She did not die, either in body or spirit, as many a weaker woman might,—the spiritual death being sadder and more cruel than the physical. No: she summoned all her force, and laid hold beside on what God gives for such conflict, and she lived. She will live, if God spares her, to be one of those noble women, helpful and sympathetic, who give plenteously to others of the riches within them, having regard to suffering which their own has taught them to read, and taught also to comfort it, by remembered anguish. Other lessons, too, she learned—yet deeper. Sometimes it is by the thorny way of some sorrowful human love that God leads His chosen up to the temple of His own infinite love and rest.

And thus may come, gradually but surely, that time which is so beautiful in the lives that go on : the fair, elder womanhood, calm in its content, rich and sweet in its wider living and loving ; when, after days and nights of pain, we pass into the far-off glen of the sunbreak, not the setting : not the closing in of evening darkness, but the out-going of the morning.

SALVATION, PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.

HAVE you ever considered the various meanings of the word "salvation," as used in Scripture? It has a threefold aspect, and we lose by not remembering this. There is:—

First, salvation from the penalty of sin. Col. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 15; 2 Tim. i. 9; Eph. i. 7; ii. 8; Acts xvi. 31.

Second, salvation from the power of sin. Matt. i. 21; Rom. v. 10; vii. 24, 25; Heb. v. 9; vii. 25; Jude 24.

Third, the salvation or redemption of the body. Rom. viii. 23; xiii. 11; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Peter i. 9.

From want of clear apprehension as to the first of these, spring many doubts and misgivings as to our safety. We do not see that Christ by His substitution of Himself for us, as bearing the punishment due for our guilt, has for ever put away from us the consequences we dread. Salvation in this sense is already complete; it is absolute,—finished: it cannot

be broken, nor can it be added to. It springs from God's free unmingled mercy, which laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. It is ours to-day: present deliverance, present joy. Are we living in the strength of that joy, or are we fearing to accept it,—putting it from us, with the desponding unbelieving plea, “*Not for me* ;” shutting ourselves out from the “*Whosoever will* ;” gathering the shadows round us when we might live with free glad heart in the sunshine? Then we are refusing God's testimony—making Him a liar—grieving Him as we dare not grieve an earthly friend who would bless us with some poor gift of human love.

And yet, even when we *do* accept this free grace of pardon, and enter on the rest of heart it brings, we too often lose sight of the second salvation Christ has wrought for us, in deliverance from sin's power as well as from its punishment. Mere pardon is not God's sole aim in redemption; it is the first step, which makes a further aim possible,—“that we, *being delivered from the hand of our enemies*, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” We are to be a “people formed for His praise”—re-created after His image; Christ formed in us—His life manifested by us,—our life made one with His in glorious ineffable union. The first salvation is wrought for us by the death of

Christ,—by His having been made a curse for us, who “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” The second is attributed to His life: He lives, our advocate with the Father, to intercede for His people, to sanctify and cleanse them, to “keep them from falling,” to “present them faultless.”

Our standing is in the first salvation ; our calling is to the second. We are to die to sin as Christ died,—to rise as He rose, and sit with Him in heavenly places. And I think we shall get some clearer light on this whole subject, by turning to that wonderful third chapter of Colossians, which brings out so strongly this truth of our risen life in Christ, without which we cannot realize for ourselves the second aspect of salvation ; no new truth, by the bye : here it is, in our Bibles, as it has been for eighteen hundred years. But just now the hearts of many of God’s people seem to be turning to it with a longing love they have never known, because His spirit is leading them to see in it a source of power they have never dreamed of. It is no more new than justification by faith was new at the Reformation, and yet we know how God then put *that* truth into the hands of His children, and made it “mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.” And nothing will deliver Christians from the strongholds of worldliness in which so many are kept in miserable

bondage, but a firm grasp of the fact of their risen life with Christ. It may be that even now He is meeting the special need of His Church by this special teaching,—sending among His fainting, shrinking people, the power which is to rouse and nerve them for days of progress and of conflict, on which they are only beginning to enter.

This first verse of Col. iii. is an inference from something in chapter ii. (See verses 12, 13, 20.) There is an idea of identification here, which many overlook: we believe that Jesus died *for us*, offering Himself as the sinner's substitute to God. Here, we know, is the foundation of the peace which He has made, and on which we rest. We can remember how unutterably precious that peace seemed, when first His spirit showed us the ground of it—gave it to us as our own. And still it is there, under-lying all else,—the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast. But, after a time, even this peace does not seem enough; it gives rest, but it does not give power: we want something more. The anchor is firm, and we know the cable will hold, but the ship tosses notwithstanding, and the waves are high.

Many days of waiting there may be, some, too, of despondency, though there would be neither if there were not days of unfaithfulness as well, before we find what, without knowing it, we seek. But God

Himself will surely show it us, perhaps in the midst of much humbling, that we had not seen before what ought to have been as clear as day,—that not only has Christ died for us, but that we also die with Him. And just as the Bible seems a new book to us after our conversion, and we feel that we had read it before with closed eyes, and wonder how we *could* read and not see; so, when He first unfolds to us, in answer to the deepening need of our spiritual life, this truth of our identification with Christ in His death,—then again a veil seems lifted from the page, and what had been dim before flashes out full of new and glorious meaning.

But how is it that we thus die with Christ? We know that if indeed we belong to Him we are *in Him*,—one with Him, as the members with the Head. The Head has not only died for the members, but they have died with Him. The teaching of Romans vi. is clear upon this point: we go down with Him to the place of death. It was thus that Israel went down to Jordan in association with the Ark. *They* went into the place of death, yet alive, in company with the Ark, the symbol of God's presence and power,—and this was their preparation for victory. In like manner we must go to the cross. Death is written there on every thought and word and deed of the natural man before God,—and life is seen as

existing in Him only who lays down His life that He may take it again ; and in taking it again, confers it upon us, who are " quickened together with Him." It is there that we receive first, as at conversion, the atoning efficacy of His sacrificial death, which we realize (keeping to the type of Israel of old) in the passage of the Red Sea. And, secondly, the power to die to self as He died to it ; - which I believe is what St. Paul meant when he speaks (Phil. iii. 10) of being made " conformable unto His death." What else *can* He mean ? Not His atoning death certainly, for in that He stands alone.

Now here, is it not true, we have been wanting ? We have come through the Red Sea ; we look back to the days of Egyptian bondage, and give thanks to Him who has " delivered us from so great a death," —but there most of us stop. We know, indeed, that the atoning blood of Christ is the only ground of our justification. But we speak of resting in Jesus, till we have let the thought of rest absorb the thought of progress. But even the wilderness side of the Red Sea, as the book to which you referred in your letter so forcibly shows, is not the place of our rest. We were brought through it for a purpose, and that purpose was, that we should go up to the good land before us, and take possession of it. (Deut. vi. 23.) The wilderness is a type of the world, and

we must leave it by passing through it; in other words, the world must be overcome or we are unfaithful to our high calling. The journey from the Red Sea to the Jordan represents the first stage of a converted soul's experience, but there are others beyond. Have we reached them? Are we reaching out towards them? Or are we among the hundreds, nay thousands of Christians who are content with the wilderness: *safe so far*, but never entering the good land of promise?

"But I long to enter there," perhaps you may answer me. But are you ready for what comes first? There is no entrance into Canaan except through Jordan. "I cannot realize this risen life in Christ—this salvation in Him from sin's dominion:" is not this too often our complaint? "I see it in my Bible, but I do not know its power in my life." No: because we do not know the meaning of the dying *with Him* which precedes it: we shrink from that. The waters of the river of judgment are dark and cold. It is hard to be shown that there is nothing in us but death. We knew we could not save ourselves, but you remember what sore struggles there were with self-righteousness before we learned that; yet the struggles are still sorer before we learn that we cannot sanctify ourselves,—before we begin to cry out, not, "Lord help me," but "Lord make me."

And this is just what God will teach us. If His Spirit shows us the good land, and wakes in us the desire to go up and possess it, He will, He must take us down first to Jordan. We cry for holiness, we yearn for closer communion, and He just sends us the sense of utter dryness and emptiness and powerlessness. He brings us down to complete self-loathing, self-despair. It is a way of darkness,—through the valley of the shadow of death; but it is His way—the right way; for life is only through death. (John xii. 24.)

What have we learned of this? It is a solemn question: are we willing to face it,—or do we shrink? Ah, how often we turn aside from the truth because we dare not look at it,—because there is so much in our lives which will not bear its light, so much it must alter and put aside. Let us remember again that deep word of our Lord, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

And yet (here is the point to which I am trying to lead you) do not our thoughts of Christ too often stop at Calvary? We think of Him as the dying Saviour, through whom we enter into life, but we forget the opened grave—the risen Lord. But what is the meaning of those words in Rom. v. 10: “Saved by His Life.” Saved from what? Not from God’s wrath, for the words are addressed to those already reconciled: No,—but the Life also of Jesus,—that

very risen Life in the power of which He is now at the right hand of God, is manifested in us. (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.) He imparts Himself to us. It is not only that we abide in Him, but He abides in us. We may know the one as our justification, and yet we may know nothing of the other as our power of holiness ; but see how continually the Apostles speak of *Christ in us* : Col. i. 27, Rom. viii. 10, Gal. ii. 20, Gal. iv. 19, Eph. iii. 17.

And now, do you not see the consequences which flow from this ? No : we cannot see them, they are too glorious for our dim sight ; but we get a glimpse of them "through a glass darkly,"—a glimpse enough to transfigure our whole lives with Heavenly light ; for if Christ is in us—if He imparts to us the power of His risen life, no attainment in holiness is impossible, no victory over sin too hard. To grasp this truth is to enter on the good land indeed. Before, we fought, and looked for failure ; now, we fight still, must fight to the end,—but we know that we may overcome ; rather, we know that He overcomes : it is no question of ourselves,—there is nothing in us which can conquer. We do not look there for power, or, when we do, we go back to certain failure. But we look to Him, our captain : He, He only gives us the victory.

You understand now what I mean by salvation from the dominion of sin. Look on to the following

verses of this same chapter. It is only through the life of Christ in us that their practical teaching can have any meaning for us. "The Gospel first bestows the gift, then imparts the precept ; which is only to be obeyed in the power which the gift imparts."*

Do we not remember how we have striven and striven to "seek those things which are above," while yet some invisible chain seemed always to drag us down ? We need, first, to have our point of view entirely changed,—to realize that in the unity of Christ's Body we are above even now, seated with Him in heavenly places ; and that our life henceforth is not to be a lifting ourselves up, as by a painful effort, but a joyous springing up by the force of life within.

True, there will be conflict still, but the ground of it is changed. It is not the conflict of effort, but the conflict of ceasing from efforts,—of laying the strain of them all, moment by moment, on Jesus only. Sin too, as the occasion of conflict—must not that remain ? If we understand it as consisting only of conscious transgression, our struggle with it may cease ; but if sin is anything contrary to the mind of God, which of us can say we are free ? For the more we learn of God's holiness, the more, surely, we must loathe our

* Dora Greenwell.

own unholiness,—the more sensitive we must become to our own impurity. Sin within,—sin of thought and motive, self-will, self-indulgence, pride, temper, uncharitableness,—still these are present with us : present—*yet overcome*. And how overcome ? By the “exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.” Or, if they are not overcome, it cannot be because that power fails, but because we fail in surrendering ourselves to its mighty working.

And yet another, the third, aspect of salvation is still future, as distinguished from past and present. It is not complete now, it cannot be, till we, and all those that are “departed in the true faith of Christ’s Holy Name, have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and mind, in God’s eternal and everlasting glory.”

EDUCATION IN TRUTHFULNESS.

YOU do not give me credit for knowing much about the training of children ? Well, I dare say you are right, for the best theories are apt to break down when they come to be tested by practice ; and I, and thousands more, must be content to the end of our days to have our strictures met by the half bitter sarcasm of that old Scotch proverb which rises so readily to a young matron's lips : " Maidens' bairns are aye weel bred."

But one thing I should like to say, not about "management" in any shape, of which you ought to know ten times more than I ; but about one essential point of moral training : teach your children to be true.

"Of course," you reply : but bear with me still, and do not hastily conclude that I am giving unneeded counsel. Look away, for a moment, from your own nursery to the general state of English society as it exists at present. Look at any development of it,

from the highest downwards, and acknowledge what you see, with fairness if it must be with shame. What is the one want, everywhere felt, from the poet's cry for

“A strong still man in a blatant land,
Whatever you name him,—what care I :
Aristocrat, autocrat, democrat,—one
Who can rule, and dare not lie,”

down to the fashionable lady (alas and alas that one should say it) whose toilette is a tissue of falsehoods, and the shopkeeper who sells anything but what he professes to sell ? Is it not, however we may disguise and gloss it over, simply and nakedly the want of truth ? And what is it that makes our modern life, though full of material and intellectual wealth, yet still a poor mean thing, growing every day poorer and more mean ? What is bringing the honour of an Englishman to be almost as much a by-word as it was once a rock of strength ? Worse than all, what is disgracing the very name of religion, linking it in too many minds with every form of hypocrisy ? Falsehood—deceit in word and deed.

We do not like to admit this, but can we open our eyes to the state of this England of ours and not see it ? Religion separated from morality, the true spiritual life of our people gradually dying out, and as a consequence, material decay to follow,—already presa-

ged too sadly, notwithstanding our vaunted progress. For, when we begin to substitute sham work of all kinds, short cuts, things that literally are not what they seem, for the old honest fashions of patient plodding and toiling, there can be no surer sign that a people's conscience is put to sleep, and that some sharp visitation will come, as it is needed, to waken it once more, and bid the nation arise and live. For God's law of righteousness remains, and will assert itself, though we may not always be able to trace it in the confusion of our own or other days. But, as surely as God is true, He will vindicate truth. "The mills of God grind slowly," but their grinding never fails. He will deal, in His own time, with whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie: it is the Lord's controversy. How and when He will settle it we cannot tell: probably in ways we little expect, and less desire; but He will do it.

"Well, but," you will say, "what has all this to do with my nursery?" Simply that English nurseries are the springs of English life. One can hardly believe that, if English boys and girls were taught as they used to be taught in days when people learned their catechism and "did their duty" in such fashion as they have forgotten now,—taught in word and deed to "speak the truth and shame the devil;" one can hardly believe, I say, that this

plague-spot of falsehood could grow and spread as it does. I greatly fear that even Christian parents are to blame in this matter. They teach children texts and hymns, but they do not teach them everyday morality. I know within my own circle more than one home where the children receive most careful Bible teaching, and yet they are not shown how to live it out in this one point of truth speaking. Small deceits are passed over without notice: for instance, Johnnie when at fault in some school-room question, will invariably reply on the least hint, "Oh yes, I know: I was just going to say that if you had'n't told me." But the governess's attempt to correct what is only one index of an untruthful character, meets with summary reproof from Mamma, who "will not have her children fettered with morbid scruples." And so in many other things. No child in the nursery ever confesses a fault without some cobweb prevarication which ought to be punished more than the fault itself: but punished it never is.

"There are so few *true* in the world," a gentleman remarked the other day, very cynically I thought, but a little reflection convinced me that he was not mistaken. How few friends, for instance, you can thoroughly trust,—hardly more than one or two in a lifetime! How rare to find a person whose representations of fact are not mis-representations! How

few give you simple historic reality, instead of exaggeration and imagination more or less unconscious! How constantly you are startled by finding deceit and untruthfulness you can hardly credit in those you have known for years! How often some strange dimness comes over the transparency of a character you had thought as clear as day! And in the quick consciousness of it, how often you say, though, happily, nature is too strong for your resolutions, that you will never trust anybody again! Yet, next to faith in God, nothing so greatly contributes to the healthy growth of our moral being, as unshaken faith in man; and if this lower becomes more difficult, must not the higher, in some proportion, suffer?

But I go back to my point,—that this evil must originate, to a certain extent at least, in defective early training. Would the bent of after-life, in too many cases, be entirely opposed to “whatsoever things are true,” if it had been turned towards them in the years when character receives the impulse it will retain? There are indeed instances where falsehood is too thoroughly ingrained to be eradicated, but apart from these I cannot but think that, if the sense of truthfulness were more cultivated in the minds of children, we should not find it so sadly deadened in grown-up men and women. Not as respects speech only, though that is much, but speak-

ing truth can come only from being true. Train your little ones to this, so far as you may do it by training: teach them to hate lies, direct or indirect, to shrink with sharp recoil from all that cannot bear the light; teach them to be real; never let them learn the meaning of "company goodness,"—going into the drawing-room and "behaving," because there are visitors, and "what will they think of naughty children;" teach them that pretence is lying, that exaggeration is lying, that everything, in fact, is a lie, which intentionally appears what it is not; teach them that to be true is more, far more, than to be successful,—that all "success" built upon unreality is miserable and shameful failure; teach them, from God's Word, His hatred of falsehood, how it is the one thing which, in any shape, He cannot away with, which He will judge and not spare. Show them how all contact with it is contact with the father of lies; how truth is of the light, God's light,—and falsehood of everlasting darkness.

THE TWO PUPILS.

I DO not think you ought to be discouraged because one of your pupils makes slower progress than the other. From the little I saw of both children during my visit to you, I fancy the true measure of it in each is exactly the reverse of your estimate. Little Edith is an unexceptionably good child. She keeps her frocks clean and her hair tidy, and when she grows up she will keep her opinions tidy too, and arrange them in regular orthodox fashion,—so many and no more; she acquires knowledge quickly, and has a certain dutiful pleasure in gaining it; she never tries to miss a lesson, and is greatly scandalised at Dora's delight in half-holidays; she will give you strings of dates and summaries of history, and repeat any number of "rules," with the exceptions thereto belonging. Altogether she is a most satisfactory pupil to teach. You feel at the end of every day that something has been put into her mind which will be kept

there: you can take stock of her mental gains, and count the additions. Yes: but what will she do with them? I fear nothing. Her mind is a granary wherein seeds of knowledge are stored; not a garden in which they germinate. They will lie there lifeless, yielding no future blessing of seed to the sower or bread to the eater. She can accumulate, but she does not assimilate. I would give all her facts for one of Dora's thoughts, confused and blundering as they may be.

In some ways Dora is much more trying to teach than her cousin: you cannot pump information into her mind as you can into a stone basin, which will hold it till it is wanted; the material is too porous for that. You do not find much trace one week of what you have laboriously imparted the week before; but it is there, nevertheless: not as you gave it,—perhaps in some shape you hardly recognize, yet as a source of living freshness and strength. She will never equal Edith in mechanical recollection of dates and places, but the scenes and heroes of history are as real to her as the garden and the playmates of to-day; and she will always rebel somewhat against school-room tasks, but her accidental education will bring her in stores of wealth far more precious,—education gained in those same half-holidays, when Edith works with such pattern

industry and Dora lies on the orchard grass,—apparently doing nothing, but really drinking in the teaching of earth and sky, though she can no more recall or measure it than the outlines of the clouds that melt and change as she watches them. These idle afternoons will have more influence on Dora's future than all Edith's repetition of summaries upon her's; for she grows as the flowers grow, shooting out little rootlets here and there, and unfolding the leaves of her fresh, healthful life, to all influences that reach her as she needs them. Knowledge somehow *comes* to her: she dwells in the best, and gathers it, without much need of set culture; she is truly, as some one says, "a child full of possibilities,"—keen enough, some of them, both for acting and enjoying.

"But she is such a naughty child," you say: "so passionate and wilful. Now Edith is always obedient: one never has reason to find fault with her." What will she be as a woman, when, as a child, she has attained such an unbroken level of goodness! Don't be shocked, but I really feel oppressed by the prospect. However, as to Dora's naughtiness, you must have patience with her there, as well as in her slowness to learn. Her's is a strong nature, and its forces of evil are too much for anything but God's grace to overcome. May He draw her early to seek that!

And I believe it is with her even now. She is not fond of reading good little books, but her eyes were fixed on me as I told her and Edith a Bible story, while the latter gravely remarked that she had "heard it before." And the keeping back of one angry word within those eager lips, when she is quivering with impatience down to the tips of her fingers, is a more real victory for Dora, though dozens of naughty ones have gone before it, than Edith has ever gained yet. Her goodness will be always somewhat of the militant order, and in her fighting she may now and then hit hard blows at those who stand near; but she will have what Edith will never learn,—sympathy for the failures and tenderness for the struggles of others. Edith will watch them with a sort of lofty wonder and pity, unmoved and perhaps a little scornful. Dora will throw herself into the conflict with all the strength of love, and not without some knowledge of its agony; but weary, fainting hearts will bless her, and One will whisper, "Ye have done it unto Me."

What will her future be? I often wonder and ponder over it, with a wistful longing to shield her from the sorrow I foresee. Edith will glide over the surface of life,—Dora will be taken down into its lonely places, where the shadow of death lies dark. Such characters, wayward and fiery with all their nobleness,

need "strong cure," and the process of it is often through mortal anguish. Yet it is His chosen vessels that God passes through a furnace seven times heated. He leads none thither but those whom He can trust, and whom He is fitting for noblest use, here or afterward. We may leave her with Him. He who knows the spirit He has made, and can measure its capacity for pain, will not try it too sorely: and perhaps our over-tender shielding might be the dimming of her crown one day; besides, even here, God compensates such natures for the burden of suffering He lays upon them. He meets them when their hearts are torn, and so reveals His love, that they forget, in the sight, the aching of their wounds.

Do not think I undervalue Edith because I write of her as I have done. I can see her, somewhere in the years to come, ruling her husband's house with placid wifely dignity, and managing a nursery full of children with a moderation and self-control most edifying to behold. The members of her household will hardly love one another in the distracted fashion which leads to endless trouble of "hurt feelings." Her "practical" sense will over-rule all nonsense of that kind; but they will do their duty in bearing and forbearing, with most unexceptionable patience. And then all her domestic machinery will work admirably, accomplishing the right thing at the right

time, and in the right way. She will meet all social claims too, and give most correct entertainments, impossible to find fault with, if perhaps a trifle difficult to enjoy. And all her acquaintance will speak of her as a "useful, estimable woman."

Dora, on the other hand, will not be a general favourite. Only kindred eyes will know how to read her's, and she will sometimes show the worst side of herself to any who have not skill to touch the best. But those who love her once, will go on loving. She will gain and give treasures of affection which few can measure. Will she marry? I cannot tell: doubtful perhaps. But one love will grow up in her life—a gift of blessing though it may come through scorch and pain.

She will be "in her teens" before long, and then your task will be harder. Do you remember how you felt, when you were a very young thing? It is curious to hear, old, long-forgotten sentiments and thoughts bubbling up again in another girl's chatter, recalling the time, and the self, of long ago; do let the chatter be free and unrestrained, and do not think it beneath your dignity to be confidential now and then, and impart to her the cream of your own experience: not that she can take it in, but it may give a tone to her dreamings, and encourage her to tell you in return a good deal of what passes behind the smooth white

brow, which has never yet been wrinkled by a trouble. Let her even venture on the ground of "love," about which, like every girl, she will have "her own ideas." Try to win the "ideas" from her, and let them be fairly cooed over to you, who will treat the subject reverently, and show her how our Lord honoured the sanctity of marriage as a type of His own Love for His Church ; for, after this, she will be less likely to let silly children like herself desecrate holy mysteries in light bantering talk.

QUESTIONS.

I THINK I can see, dear, that, through all your questionings of this and that, your heart is hungering and thirsting still. You want something you have not : is it not so ? You want certainty, you say,—and how, amidst all the confusion of opinions and controversies, are you to find it ? you are feeling much as the woman of Samaria did, when she spoke of the coming Messiah which is called Christ,—and added, “ When He is come He will tell us all things.” I do not think she meant this as a distraction : I believe she truly expressed a want. It is as if she had said, “ How all this may be I know not,—whether you Jews or we Samaritans are right as to worship ; but there is One who when He comes will tell us all things : from Him we shall know ! ” Is not the same longing, the same uncertainty, in many hearts among us ? We want some one to “ tell us all things.” Religious conviction is assailed on one side by science, on another by criticism, on yet another by worldliness.

There are doubtful questions in every mind : few of us, even in the most sheltered christian homes, can escape the blighting breath of that spirit of scepticism which is poisoning the atmosphere of faith : and even if this does not reach us, there are many difficulties which we are unable to resolve. Questions of duty,—details of daily life, who shall settle them ? We want some one to whom we may tell them all out,—whose wisdom may guide us, as light through darkness.

Have we ever heard Jesus saying, “I that speak unto thee am He” ? Have we heard Him speak, being among the sheep who know His voice : “I that speak unto thee” ? Has he dealt with us thus, alone ; none near to listen—none knowing the secrets which are between our souls and Him ? Then we shall know what it is to have Him tell us all things,—to have our doubts dispelled by His teaching, to be in such close communion with His *mind*, that we are always “guided by His counsel.” Only I think, we must take care that all our questions are put to Him and to none else. We must have no way before us, but only to follow Him ; no will, but to do His ; no thought, but of Him. There must be no stopping short to say, “Is it necessary to do this or that ? Is there harm in such or such things ? Is it needful to be thus separate ?” We shall hear nothing from Him clearly while we question so, but only while we inquire, “What

would our Lord have done,—what would He command ?” Then, to the unreserved asking will be granted the unreserved answer. He will tell us all we need to know in order to glorify Him, and if there are some questions to which He gives no reply, and others of which He says, “Ye cannot bear them now,”—He will strengthen us to wait, with Him, till the “knowing in part” is over, and we know, even as we are known.

Another word in that wondrous dialogue by the well seems to me to meet your need, so far as I can guess it. Christ speaks of the living water : “Who-soever drinketh of the water which I shall *give* Him shall never thirst.” Which I shall *give*—“freely,” “without money and without price :” and yet, to some of us, here lies our one difficulty. We do not like accepting a gift,—we would rather earn wages ; for it is very humbling to be put down on the ground of simple receiving, which implies that we have nothing to give in return. We do not dream of *doing* anything perhaps : most of us have been too well taught to think much of works ; but our feelings—ought not they to be worth something ? And so we try to *feel* right, at any rate, before we ask for the living water. Perhaps we fancy we ought to long for it more, and we will not seek it till we do. We will not go to God just as we are,—rather indifferent than

otherwise ; not exactly thirsting, hardly longing that He may waken the thirst : hence we go on, for a blank of dreary years,—not quite unhappy, yet never fully, consciously, content. But the true help is in our dear Lord's word : "If thou knewest the *gift* of God." Only take the gift, and do not trouble yourself overmuch as to whether you desire it sufficiently. Take it ; and, with the receiving, will come both satisfying and yet longing for more,—a longing which has no pain, like some which can never be met, but which only draws us on to deeper, richer rest.

A friend pointed out to me the other day a trinity of texts which comprehend the whole Gospel : John iii. 16 ; vi. 37 ; i. 12, 13. Do they not unfold the entire scheme of redemption ? pointing to the Father's love, His own royal grace, as the grand first cause,—to the Son's love as the efficient cause,—and then to the result of these as actually applied by the Holy Spirit : "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

One word more I would say, not harshly but in tenderest love : remember the danger, the responsibility of your present position. You know so much about the Saviour,—He seems so near you,—shall He "pass by" and leave you still unblessed ? There is a solemn lesson in those verses of John ii. 23, 24 ; He did not trust Himself to them, did not treat

them as true and earnest disciples. They entered into no spiritual relation with Him, nor He with them. He saw that the faith produced by His miracles was a mere intellectual conviction—not saving faith—the loving recognition of the heart. We also may acknowledge a Divine Lord, whom we believe and outwardly follow, we may reckon ourselves, or be reckoned by others, among His people; but the veil which hides us from our own eyes or from those of our fellow-men is pierced by His. He does not “commit Himself” unto us; we know nothing of the free outpouring of His love: He does not call us “friends,” or unfold to us the deep living truth by which His children are made free; because He knows that, in our heart, there would be no response of love. Some idol is reigning on His throne: some earthward clinging is holding us back from His service. He can see it, and if we are only willing He can make us see it too. If we are only willing to be set free, He can set us free; and *then* He will show us what His love is,—*then* He will “come to us and make His abode with us.”

ASSOCIATED WORK.

I FEEL much for your difficulties about your fellow-workers. They are very trying, and yet perhaps one ought not to say they are surprising. Did you suppose that the mission sisters had suddenly become angels without wings? That all pride and temper, all jealousy and hyper-sensitiveness, were left behind, once and for ever, on the threshold of the home?

Of course, in theory, you expected nothing of the kind; but, practically, you did think that Christians so devoted to doing good would not be thus quick to take offence at trifles. Yet it is a sorrowful truth that "doing good" may be set about in very un-Christlike fashion, with will unsubdued and self by no means held in check. And he, of whose "devices" we are "not ignorant," is surely not shut out from a community of Christian workers; it rather seems his special delight to tempt such to neglect "whatsoever things are lovely." He turns their work itself

into a snare. They are so busy in it, mind and body often alike overstrained, that, if only it is done, they forget that Christ would have it as on earth. He would have done it,—in all grace of lowliness and patience, in all beauty of self-forgetful meekness and most tender forbearance. Hence with no wish to look for moths, one cannot help feeling that many who for their work's sake are highly esteemed in love, do nevertheless try the love they gain. For they are often rather hard and angular, careless about giving pain, and impatient of prejudices and prepossessions, with small stock of that one good quality which comprehends so many more,—consideration.

After all, it is much easier to go and spend strength in hospital or mothers' meeting, than to keep temper in family life. The one, far more than the other, tries "what manner of spirit we are of;" and this is especially the case where the grouping of the family is artificial and not natural. Subjection there must be, to make organization possible; and yet, where many are disposed to hold fast the privilege of "protesting" in opposition to any rule of obedience, it is hard to keep the various elements fused in harmony. Difficulties about work, too, are constantly arising. A sister who will go into the meanest room in any court, and think it no degradation to

sit down among its wretched inmates with her Bible, will rebel against any duty she considers menial at home, even though she may thus set some one else free for what she could not do. The "serving of tables" is in any shape altogether beneath her dignity. She forgets that, in meek acceptance of lowliest tasks may be truest fellowship with a lowly Redeemer; that, in filling some merely material office, there may be a more real offering to God than in one apparently higher and more spiritual.

But we have small need to look beyond ourselves for faults in this matter. After all, the trials in our work are like so many mirrors, showing a good deal within we might not else have seen. We are very humble while nothing stirs our pride,—very patient and yielding when no one differs from us. And we can do very disagreeable things *by our own choice*, much more cheerfully than we can stand aside and let another do them, while something pleasanter, which we had not chosen, is appointed for our share. There are certain sacrifices, hard enough to look at, which are nevertheless yielded easily, because they do not cross our wills. And yet we cannot give in to another on a simple matter of opinion, without showing a degree of temper which makes itself felt through the household like an east wind.

How far am I doing this for myself? How far from

love to Christ ? are questions which these daily worries may help us to answer : and the temptation they bring to stand aloof from what we have not originated, or to criticize unkindly plans for which our own have been set aside, answers them often in humbling form. It shows that the motives we thought so pure may be more mingled than we know ; that the eye we thought so single was not fixed solely on the glory of our Lord. And thus, perhaps, He is giving, what we have often asked and then forgotten,—the knowledge of ourselves which is to deepen our knowledge of Him. We turn, in very loathing and despair from the sight of unholiness we never dreamed of, but we throw ourselves back on one whose Blood can cleanse as well as justify,—whose power can realize for us the keeping of the command, which is itself a promise : “ Sin shall not have dominion over you.” And thus the work we do for Him, He makes a means of grace for us,—training us through failure, and, by falls raising us higher.

Hence (do you not think so ?) comes one great blessing of *associated* service. We may work on in a little sphere of our own without collisions or hindrances, and feel that we can “ do so much more by ourselves ;” which is very well, if work is to be measured by quantity. But what about the spirit of it ? The Master’s estimate of that may be dif-

ferent from ours, and yet we cannot correct our wrong one without some test; and this He sends us very often through tempers and temperaments in our fellow-workers.

Stier remarks how, even for St. Paul, His chosen instrument, the answer to his question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" must come through man, and not direct from God. "For not every one, alas, who has fallen lowly before the Lord will bow before man for the Lord's sake."

We have learned much too when we see the folly of expecting Christians to be "all goodness." I remember the time when I constantly condemned myself if I could not find in some the attraction I ought to find, being drawn rather to others who were perhaps not equally "orthodox." Now I see that my instinct was right; that the repelling forces I was conscious of were present, and must needs be active. Something in my organization was specially sensitive to their influence, and, though many excellences accompanied them, I could not help being acted upon rather by the one than the other. You may sneer at antagonisms and attractions, but they are realities, and will remain such. *Now* I can like "good people" far better than when I was striving against a feeling which I could not put down. They are not perfect, and I do not try to think them so.

If they were, by the bye, how far away they would be from me!

"I wish we were at home," Milne says, in one of his letters; "where the members as well as the Head will be able to say of one another, 'Thou art all fair!'" How fervently one echoes the longing; and yet our true help meanwhile is, to try and see the Head in the members,—to look at what there is of Christ, to look over what is left of nature. But we can only do this while we share very deeply the spirit of the Head. He sees not as man seeth,—finding fair lilies in His garden where human eyes would hardly seek them. If we were nearer to Him, we should look at others from a different standpoint; and, this being changed, we little know how they might seem changed also. The picture which in one light is nothing but blurred lines, shows in another as a thing of beauty.

And for the faults we cannot but see, let us not forget that the common guilt of Christ's people must be confessed and mourned by each. Let us hide them from one another, but humble ourselves before the Lord, while we tell them out to Him. If they are not overcome, is there no sin at our door because we have not pleaded that the erring one may see them as God sees, or that the sore struggle which He alone watches may be aided by

a fuller gift of His power? How can we tell the conflict some sorrowing heart may be going through at this very moment because of the proud, hasty word which may be rankling in our own? "Fallen again!" Oh, let our cry go up with that which is wrung from the bitter remembrance of dishonour done to God, that for His own name's sake He may put forth His might and give the victory. Little we dream how the "beauty of the Lord" might be seen on many an unlovely Christian, if we joined our prayers to those which, in their long waiting, have grown almost hopeless. It would be a secret ministry, in the true spirit of our one Advocate with the Father. His hand must consecrate us for it; let us seek from Him the prevailing faith and self-forgetful love which alone can make it effectual.

WORSHIP.

I HAVE been thinking much to-day, I do not know why, of that text in Habakkuk: "The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." You know there are two kinds of silence,—the silence that has nothing to say, and the silence that has too much. But it is well for us sometimes to be still before God,—not always to tell out, even to Him, the crowding multitude of thoughts and wants for which we have no words; but to rest in His presence, in utter self-abandonment and self-surrender. We have known moments like this when our very hearts have been silent, even from prayer, in precious nearness to our Lord; when there has been no sound, no voice in His holy temple but His own word of life, no light but that which by its very clearness must purify.

Have we not very much lost sight of the true meaning of worship? We think that to pray for what we want, to pour out our griefs and confess

our sins, or at most to rejoice in the sense of God's pardon, is all that God requires. So it may be : but love takes no thought about requirements. She knows that it is "more blessed to give than to receive," and rejoices that this blessedness God has not withheld, even in relation to Himself, from His poor worthless creatures. Surely, then, we are wrong when we make worship consist only in gathering what He has for us, and forget the outpouring to Him of our hearts' adoration.

Too many of us, infected by the restless spirit of the times, make worship consist in work. They are *doing* for God, and they have little time for aught else. To many more worship is mere hearing,—listening to sermons, or even criticising them. But of waiting before God, wrapt in the soul's silence, neither hearing, nor doing,—how little we know of this !


But you will tell me I am verging towards mysticism. Not greatly to be feared in the "practical" days of this nineteenth century. We are so greatly losing our power of passive reception, so to speak, of holiest influences, that a little more of the contemplative element might not come amiss to us.

You must not think, on the other hand, that I undervalue preaching : it is God's own ordinance, and I do not forget His solemn word, that through its very foolishness it hath pleased Him to "save

them that believe." I know that it rouses the dormant spiritual life of His children, and often conveys that life to those who are not among them. But preaching is a means toward worship, not worship itself. If the flock of God receive from the hand of their shepherd sound and wholesome nourishment, it is surely that they may render back to the chief Shepherd and Bishop of their souls the incense of hearts overflowing with His love. Surely to listen is less than to worship; to adore is more than to understand.

I do not care to "guard" my letter as I might guard an essay, otherwise I should have to fence my truth with counter-truths. It may be misunderstood; but one cannot always stay to reconcile, though cautions and harmonies are indeed necessitated by the existence of error, and God's Word alone is free and bold on this side and on that. But I will only give you now one golden sentence from Hooker the "judicious:" "We are not simply to measure good by distance from evil, because one vice may in some respects be more opposite to another than either of them to that virtue which holdeth the true mean between them both." Which piece of wisdom touches human life at many points; but the special application of it now, in my mind, you will not find difficult to determine.

TOILING AND TRUSTING.

 MORE and more I see that it is indolence which eats away the heart of our spiritual life. We want more energy of soul. Every step of advance is positive gain; but every day of idleness is not only loss, but added difficulty. We need to cultivate the reality of earnestness,—so to master our flagging spirits that we may live in the power of what we know; and, thus living, our knowledge grows. “Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.”

We realize so little, we test so little, the meaning of those words in St. John: “He that hath the Son of God *hath* everlasting life.” In this deepest sense, godliness “hath promise of the life that now is.” Redemption is deliverance accomplished, not merely foreshown; a hope “set before us,” but not removed into the distant future,—rather “brought in” to the door of our common living; sufficient for all time,—not only of our wealth or our sore

tribulation, but for the small perplexities or provocations of each day.

Is not our life in Christ, here or hereafter, *one* life still? It is hidden now: then it shall "appear in glory." Here is the life of tangled and shapeless roots, struggling with darkness and cold: there is the life of the flower, unfolding in sunshine. But even now, if in St. Paul's words we have "received the atonement,"—we "have life," and are not merely waiting for it. True, it is a life of temptation and sorrow, in contact and daily contention with the forces of death; but still of "joy which no man taketh from us," and of "peace which passeth understanding."

We lose much by forgetting this: what riches of spiritual blessing are before us, concerning which our Lord might say, "How long are ye slack to possess the land!" It is one thing to know our portion—another to dwell in it. The condition of Israel's inheritance is ours: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on, *that* have I given you." (Jos. i. 3.)

It was the foreshadowing of the New Testament promise, "according to your faith be it unto you." So it is, that, although God has blessed us, here and now, with all spiritual blessings "in heavenly places in Christ," it remains for ourselves to *take possession*.

It was not enough that God gave the land to Israel ; He gave it to them that they might conquer it. It is not enough that God has given us our Land of promise in Christ ; we must set the "soles of our feet" upon it for ourselves. How much is still remaining of our spiritual nature which is like the seven tribes, who when the Tabernacle of the congregation was set up at Shiloh had "not yet received their inheritance !" and so this glorious truth of our one life in Christ, will bring little joy or power if it is only held as a doctrine. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can really unlock to our souls the treasures that are hid for us in Jesus : but, when they are put into our hands we must grasp them. We must cry for the unbelief, which paralyses our grasp, to be removed. There is power in Christ Jesus "exceeding great" to us-ward who believe. Ah, if we were only willing to give up to it the very last corner of our hearts, we should find it penetrating and purifying where sin reigns now, and bringing "into captivity every thought" to His obedience. *We* have no might in this battle : we have striven for victory again and again, and failed to win it : Why ? just because we *have* striven. We have not cried to Him, with whom nothing is impossible, "Oh Lord, undertake for me ;" or, even as we cried, we have secretly doubted whether He would do it : we have expected too much

from ourselves, and too little from God. We have set ourselves to do this or that *for Him*, instead of trusting Him to do it *for us*,—and then we have said, “Alas, I have no power:” forgetful that *He has*. Whereas our plea should be, “Now, Lord, the work is Thine; how can I dare to doubt that the power is Thine also, even to sanctify me wholly and preserve me blameless unto the coming of Thy Son!”

The one great practical conviction to be ever held fast, is surely this,—that, being baptized into Christ, abiding in Christ,—strength for all duty, grace for all attainment, is ours by simple right of possession. The power that made the grave give up its dead,—the power by which He burst its bars and rose triumphant to the right hand of the Father,—this same power is mighty in us for victory over spiritual death. It never yet proved too weak for anything; it is “hindered” only “because of our unbelief;” it cannot work, because we fetter it: it lies within us, like untold wealth in the bank,—waiting only to be drawn upon.

And this lesson of joyful trust and triumph, God seems again and again to impress upon us in His Word. He finds us prostrate and despairing: He first lifts us up and bids us stand; and, having done this, every other blessing follows. We are not to

lie down crushed under a sense of incapacity. God will not have it so: for there is a kind of imperial dominion assigned to the least believer in Christ, in virtue of the power which is given to Him in heaven and in earth, so long as He abides in us and we in Him, drinking in fresh draughts and inspirations of His undying energy.

WORK FOR LADIES.

THE two sisters here make me melancholy. There is so much wasted power in their lives,—wasted, because for want of a legitimate outlet it is misdirected. Do parents know what they are doing, I wonder, when they condemn their daughters to luxurious repression, and hem them in with over-careful limitations, instead of allowing them freedom for the active healthy work which is as much their right as that of any man in creation? Only something to do—something to live for,—from how many hearts that cry is rising, silent only because it is exceeding bitter! Even to see the end of it would be something; but to go on from year to year through the round of visiting and dressing, practising and walking, and to feel that it is indeed a *round* and not a *line*, with no break in its grey continuance, is a strain of endurance almost too heavy to bear. And yet thousands *do* bear it, with meek unconscious heroism, submitting without a murmur to cut down

much that is highest and noblest in their nature, to the dwarfed standard that is required of them.

"All nonsense!" I fancy I hear you say: "*I would always find something to do!*" I have no doubt of that: but you must remember that a certain amount of energy must be presupposed, for the finding of what is difficult to find. And there are thousands of women whose lives would be enriched and blessed by work outside their own homes, aye, and who are longing for it too, while yet they have not force of character enough to carry them over or through the barriers which keep them from it.

Of course I know that in every life there is something to do. I know too that each is watched over by One who judges best what will help forward its true development,—by One whose purpose for it cannot be thwarted. And we can see so little of what this may be, that we need never grieve over any, as if "circumstances" must inevitably spoil it. But this knowledge by no means lessens our responsibility towards each other, and I do not envy parents who deprive their daughters of that luxury of spending and being spent, which is the sweetest earth knows.

"If I am glad of anything," a friend wrote to me the other day, "it is, that I live in the nineteenth century, when women can work in healthful ways, making their lives bright with reflected light, instead

of being bound down, by *les convenances*, in a narrow stifling atmosphere, where all their powers are employed to keep up appearances, or hang on to the skirts of a society which would gladly shake them off. I know two elderly young ladies, between forty and fifty, who spend the winter at a summer watering-place, and let their house in the summer, and are always struggling to dress nicely, and live nicely, and practise their old duetts to play out at parties, and always are treated like girls, and consort with them,—so poor and faded and unwelcome,—only asked out of charity. They seem anachronisms in society. I daresay they are beglamoured with the old lights still, and each expects the other will soon marry and have a home of her own. The worn thread-bare illusions, how pitiful they seem beside the happiness of working women !”

One possibility of helping others lies within such easy reach of many ladies, that I wonder they do not more often embrace it. What of the knowledge acquired in laborious school-days, and the accomplishments which, even in a money point of view, have cost so much ? Are there none to whom their very possession would be a door of hope,—daughters perhaps of professional men with narrow means, on whom the difficulty of educating their children weighs with a sore pressure they hardly dare ac-

knowledge? Look at the curate's family, or the doctor's,—the "living" of each being still in the future; how often the harassed, worn-out mother must sigh over the growing girls she has neither time to teach nor money to send to school. Or look again at the young governess, home for the holidays, and painfully conscious that from her own want of culture she is hardly able to keep ahead of her pupils. She would like a firmer grasp of what she teaches; she longs for lessons from a good master, in drawing or French,—but how can she pay for them, when her wardrobe needs replenishing, and she must save every possible penny for the home fund? Or she would like to begin German, if only she could find some one to help her over its first difficulties, so that she might work on alone for a while, and have a master when she could gain more from him. I wonder if some of the young ladies who murmur because "papa and mamma will not let us visit the poor," ever reflect that there are poor, not living in cottages, who might be enriched and blessed out of stores of wealth that is not material? Even three or four hours a week given to a music or drawing-lesson, would be an untold gain to some of these, and a couple of hours daily for more systematic instruction would be still greater. I do not say that such a plan can be carried out without self-denial. Teaching is

not easy work, even with the most eager scholar, and the tie of a regular engagement, not to be lightly set aside, is apt to be sometimes irksome. But I am thinking of those who do not wish to give what costs them nothing, and they would find a sacrifice of time and patience in such service bring its own true reward. It is not quite the work they may have planned; something, indeed, far more commonplace than that: but it is true work still, which may be made a stepping-stone to much beyond itself. The mental may lead on to the spiritual. If mind comes in contact with mind, there is hope that heart may touch heart, and that thus the living water in one may flow over to quicken another.

Few parents would object to such an employment for their daughters, and many might consent to it who would forbid district or school work with most emphatic rigour. But one reason, I think, often prevents them from allowing girls other occupation than mere amusement,—they do not understand the need of it. Their own lives are probably full of business or household cares, and it simply does not occur to them that anyone else may be as greatly oppressed by having too little to do as they are by having too much; and, except in some happy, but too rare instances, there is seldom such unreserved confidence between elder and younger in a family,

that the latter can explain any longings of mind or heart which are not to be read without explanation. Too many are the parents and children who, as the despised Martin Tupper hath it,—

“While walking up and down the world have missed each other’s friendship.”

I touch on difficult ground, and perhaps it would be wisest to stop with the safe remark, that there is “much to be said on both sides.” But of one thing I feel sure,—that we often complain of want of sympathy in our pursuits and wishes, when our own reserve and pride make it impossible; and that mothers would not so frequently say, “I do not see why you should wish to do so and so,” if daughters would honestly and frankly try to make the reason clear.

And then for all who have no definite work, there is the doing of indefinite. Alas, for the little bits of pleasure that would never be given if everybody’s hands were full! “People are so busy about charity,” a lonely invalid said to me one day. She had come to the place as a stranger, but, because she did not want beef-tea and flannel, her introductions to one or two Christian ladies had brought her very little help. She did not complain of them: her remark was meant, all in good faith, as an excuse, when I

expressed my surprise that they so seldom saw her. But I could not help wondering whether those who have a certain aim before them,—so much to be “got through” in each day,—do not need a sort of supplementary band of gleaners to follow up “opportunities” they have missed. And among these unattached, there is always room for spare energies; for there are “fatherless and widows” who need to be visited in their affliction, although they do not reside in “districts,” and sick ones to be found, otherwhere than in Hospitals. And sometimes a bunch of flowers may do as much good as a tract.

Why do not we, who live in the life and the sunshine, reach forth and gather what is so near us there, and minister it again to those who are hungering? We have many things about us that bring messages, sweet and true, from the “innermost” of everlasting love and beauty. Why do we not send them on, as we read, to carry joy where human lips cannot? Why do we not remember how much is missed in the world by those who never tell their want, but go on living without it,—as they may? Why do we not remember how large a part of life, as one says, is “made up of the days that never have been lived at all”?

RETURN.

HAVE you ever noticed the first words of Hosea xiv.: "O Israel, return unto the Lord"? God is speaking to Israel as a backsliding nation, but He addresses them in the one word with which He always meets men,—“Return.” For though man has not regarded Him, man still belongs to Him,—created in His own image; bearing that image still, though broken and defaced. “Man,” says our ninth Article, “is very far gone from original righteousness.” The very phrase, the “fall of man” witnesses of some standing from which he has fallen. Hence this is always God’s message,—“Return.” “There is a true home of your spirits from which you have wandered,—come back to it.” “The prodigal in the far country,” says Dr. Vaughan, “spoke of ‘his Father’ though he was an exile, and when he thought of going to him, it was a returning,—it was to a home.” And this is the ground on which we too should deal with “them which are without.” There is something akin to God in each

heart: strive to touch that. "To talk of a man's being utterly lost to good is absurd, for then he would be a devil at once." God leaves not Himself without witness in any soul. It may be faint; it may be resisted: all the rubbish of sinful human nature may be piled up to crush and deaden it; but it is there: and I believe those are found to be most blessed and owned by Him in bringing souls to Himself, who address themselves to that witness, and rouse its slumbering testimony.

This thought has arisen while reading your last letter, and thinking of the work to which, for the present, you seem set apart. It is service on which many run who are not "sent," but God has made the steps of your sending too clear to be mistaken. May I say one word more, which this same verse in Hosea suggests to me, for it gives another hint as to God's dealing with those whom His bands of love are drawing. He always *begins with sin*,—always awakens conscience. "O Israel, return unto the Lord, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." "When the Spirit of truth is come, He will reprove the world of sin." So it was in our Lord's interview with the woman of Samaria. The "Go, call thy husband" must be spoken, to "bring back old forgotten days," and flash its terrible light into the darkness of her life. Perhaps we have now too

much lost sight of the preaching of repentance which must precede the preaching of the kingdom. Reaction from an extreme which insisted on horrors of distress, before the peace-bringing look to Jesus, and which virtually interposed a certain routine of "experience" between the sinner and the Saviour, has led to another extreme which perhaps treats sin too lightly. And it may be that just because the preparatory work of ploughing and harrowing is superficial, the seed which "immediately" springs up takes no deep root, and the rapid growth too quickly withers. I do think this is a thing to remember, if God in any way calls us to guide the spiritual life of others. We are not to say, "This do, and thou shalt live;" but we *are* to bring home to each, "This thou hast *not* done." Repentance is not conversion, but it must accompany conversion, or there is little hope of after-progress. I do not say it cannot be, but it is at least doubtful. The presumptuous self-importance, the spirit of wilfulness and intolerance, the carelessness about sin, and the lack of chastened meekness, so often seen, alas, in those truly converted, are painful evidence that the "bondage of Egypt" has not done its proper work. May not this be one secret of the transient results of some of our most hopeful revivals?

And yet, again, in all your teaching remember the

need of long patience, not only as to the result of it, but the manner of it. Especially in dealing with younger and less experienced Christians there is danger of trying to lead them on too fast, and thus inducing unreality. But, if we know ourselves what it is to receive any truth, or to be led into any practice by the Spirit of Christ, we shall not try so much to press our knowledge upon others as to wait prayerfully till God Himself fits them for it, if indeed He sees that *it* is fitted for them. Better that His hand should give them their portion, than that they should take it from ours. Better that, in simplicity of heart, they should seem to startle at anything, than that we should be instrumental in drawing them where God has not yet led them. For, if they have been faithful up to the point at which they stand, and remain faithful there, their Guide will surely meet them, and clear up the way beyond. The single-hearted who cling to Christ He will lead fast enough, and give them light fast enough too. He knows better than we how much they can bear.

I will give you a sentence from quaint old Pennington: "He that is truly spiritual and strong in the light and spirit of the Lord, cannot desire that the weak should walk just as he does, but only as they are strengthened, taught, and led thereunto, by the same Spirit that taught and led him."

PRAYER.

I CAN truly sympathize in your difficulties about “wonderful answers to prayer.” This subject has been to me always an “exercise” of faith. I have hesitated about entering on it with you, from a fear of suggesting questions which might not occur to yourself. But most thinking people have the same hesitations and perplexities, and perhaps it is better we should speak of them freely, than keep them smothered up in our hearts to trouble the peace which, thank God, they can never take away: for we have no doubt about the efficacy of prayer. We believe that “more things are wrought by it than this world dreams of.” We know that our Father *does* hear and answer the cry of His children. We take, in its simple fulness of meaning, our Lord’s assurance, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.” It has conditions, but its truth, from His lips, we accept in humble faith. The ground of our difficulty does not lie here. But, in plain words, your question and mine is this,—in

reading or hearing the experience of some Christians, "Do they always obtain what they ask; and if they do, why may not I?" For how long have we prayed for this or that, prayed earnestly, believingly, submissively, and yet in vain! On, on, through years of hope deferred, our hearts' desire is not given; the "request of our lips" is still denied. While they——

One thing we must remember. There are books full of "remarkable answers to prayer," but the *refusals have no record*. Christians put down, as they truly believe for the encouragement of others, what God gives. I am not sure whether it might not be equally for the encouragement of others to know sometimes what He refuses.

Then again, one explanation of the difficulty I take home with shame to myself, though for you I have only to state it. Is there not some hindrance *in us* to the granting of our petitions? Christ says, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "If my words," for the written Word teaches us the limits of prayer, and, when it rules within, our asking can only be *in the way of God's giving*: we cannot will to ask what would be discordant to the will of our Heavenly Father. But, are we fulfilling the condition of the promise,—fully abiding in Christ; His Word in us so abiding as to rule? If

not,—if indolence, or worldliness, or any other cause is interfering with the wholeness of our consecration, can we wonder at unanswered prayers? “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;” and there are many subtle ways of “regarding iniquity,” unsuspected till we are willing to have them shown us. Do we not see, in all who are “mighty in prayer,” that their lives are given to God, lived in Him, and for Him? And this is one secret of their power with Him.

But, beside this, the story of our Lord’s life on earth gives us other glimpses of light in our difficulty. For some suppliants there was at once the “I will,” and the immediate answer; for others, as now, the long delay. But was it not the strong faith which He tested; the weak which, in infinite tenderness, He would not try? He knew what was in man; what He was proving, and how the proof would be borne. Witness His dealing with the Syrophenician mother, and the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. Yet surely they lost nothing of their blessing through their waiting! What they gained, neither they nor we can fully know, but our guess of it may help us also in our “long patience.” It may be, we cannot tell, that from prayers which seem unanswered here, we may reap the richest harvest *there*. Perhaps, in this

sense also, the words are true: "Behold we count them happy which endure." And may we not well rejoice if His eye detects in us a longing so intense for fellowship with Himself, that He can trust us not to shrink, even if He teaches us the meaning of that exceeding bitter cry: "Oh my God, I cry in the day-time and Thou hearest not."

Some one remarks, that we are never ready to have our prayers answered, till we are quite willing that they should not be. Perhaps, indeed, we are not fit for the tokens of our Father's favour till we are able, in perfect meekness and submission, to justify Him in what seems like neglect. Was it not just this lesson He would teach the mother who pleaded for her child? He let her drink His own cup,—He let her taste His own rejection, when He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs." And she caught it at once, she took the place assigned her: she would be a dog, if He willed to call her so;—she made no defence. Her humility acknowledges it as her right position; but she would make use of it: "The dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And Jesus said, "Oh woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Was she not a "prince with Him," and had she not prevailed? He never said to His disciples, "Great is your faith:" on the contrary, He exclaimed re-

peatedly, "Oh ye of little faith." But one who dwelt, not in the favoured land of Judea, but in the despised coasts of Tyre, won a blessing from Him, which even they had never heard. He might say to her, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Yes: our prayers remain with God, though they come not back to us. They are not lost,—they cannot be, when our great High Priest gathers them each one, even the faintest breath, to present them before our Father. "The warfare of Prayer and its accomplishment," says Dora Greenwell, "is the warfare, the accomplishment of the Cross: a conquest through apparent defeat. Its work is one with that great effectual work in which its strength lies wrapped and hidden; it is, like it, a real work, and an effectual work,—though one of which the believer, with his Lord, must sometimes be content to say, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

And if it was to be one result, solemnly announced as such, of the entire life of Christ on earth, that the "thoughts of many hearts should be revealed," will not every part of His economy of grace bear the same likeness? It will be, as it were, detective in its character,—appealing to faith, and trying it. His name is secret; His footsteps are not known: but "blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."

SERMONS.

So you think Mr. A——'s preaching too sensational and exciting? I remember the time when I should have agreed with you; indeed I am still much at a loss to understand the special virtue of shouting, or the necessity of gesticulation.

But I begin to think, with Coleridge, that, for a long while past, the Church of England has been blighted with prudence; and to join him in wishing that we had a "little zealous imprudence:" I am not sure that it might not be warranted by those words of St. Paul, "that I might by all means save some." And, in this matter of preaching, just consider the object of it. Sermons are intended either to rouse the careless, or to build up in the faith of Christ those who are already His. Leaving the latter result out of sight, how many preachers seem even to aim at the former? "Oh man," I could not help saying to myself last night, while listening to the sermon addressed to our vast evening congregation at St. Mary's, "do you believe that the crowds of men and

women before you have souls to be saved or lost for ever? Can you, in the utmost stretch of charity, persuade yourself that they are all, as you would say, 'safe in Christ'? and if they are not, *what are they?* "

For this very clergyman would be inexpressibly shocked by any imputation on his belief in the eternity of punishment. He would tell you that he dares not doubt it, though he cannot explain; and he grieves most truly I know over those who do doubt: yet, if he believes it, why does he preach as if he did not? Why do he, and thousands more, deal, Sunday after Sunday, in mere vague exhortations, instead of entreating, imploring, compelling their hearers to flee from the wrath to come? "You don't believe it," a young fellow said to me once: "you can't believe it, —you orthodox Christian people; at any rate if you believe, you haven't faith in it, or you would go out into the streets and preach to every one you met. I would rather think you *did* doubt, even what you maintain, than that you held it true and let poor wretches go on without warning." I took shame to myself with the rebuke, for I had been verily guilty, and am so still. But after that I could not call Mr. A——'s preaching "sensational," even though its impassioned earnestness were ten times greater: for if the speaker realizes that he stands as God's messenger

to bid sinners escape from death to life, what can he do but be earnest ?

It seems to me most grievous that so few ministers, in the Church or out of it, aim at conversion in their preaching. We may thank God, indeed, for an increasing number who throw themselves heartily into evangelizing work ; but, " what are they among so many ? " I do not forget the hundreds and hundreds who are quietly and truly doing their Lord's will in watching for souls,—spending themselves in " labours more abundant," of which none take note save Christ : but I know and you know, that my preacher of last night is only a specimen of more than, considering the tremendous issues at stake, one can bear to remember. Good men they are, one cannot doubt, but surely the burden of souls unsaved has never been laid upon their hearts, or its weight would open their lips to different preaching, in church and home, from any to be heard from them now !

With too many, alas, the explanation of the difficulty is sufficiently simple : they have not themselves fled for refuge to the hope set before them, and how can they urge others to do so ? They hold " Evangelical " doctrines ; they are diligent in parish and school ; there seems to be nothing wanting in them but—life. And what they have not, they do not seek ; I do not mean for themselves, but in those

associated in their work. Our friend Mr. B—— has been looking out for a curate lately, and most particular have been his inquiries as to freedom from High Church or Broad Church errors. But, secure of this, he seems to have contented himself with negations—taking for granted that any one who did *not* teach error, would necessarily teach truth. As to Mr. —— being truly converted, Mr. B—— did not apparently think that within his province to consider. And yet, I suppose, he knew the meaning of our Lord's word: "Can the blind lead the blind?"

These are sad facts, dear Louisa. They ought to humble us before God for the Church of our fathers,—the Church of our own early love. Would that within her pale alone were need to grieve over an unconverted ministry preaching smooth things to unconverted congregations! But we have too much to mourn for in ourselves that we should find fault with others. Oh, that God would rouse us to "take hold of His strength," that we may plead for a mighty outpouring of His Spirit; "showers upon those that are athirst, and floods upon the dry ground."

Strange sad things do we hear and read now-days of the moral state of society, high and low; of an impure press; of the spread of infidelity and communism; of crime increasing in new forms of

horror. All true, and to an extent of which you and I hardly dream. But what is the remedy? Has the old one failed? Is there no virtue *now* in the story of the cross,—not told as a dead fact of history, but in all its living joy; told by men who know what it has done *for them*, who have faith in it, simple and uncompromising, as the power of God unto salvation for every one that believeth. We want that story,—not allusions to it only, or a few vague thoughts about it spread over many words,—but the story itself, briefly, simply told, by men who aim at a mark, and hit it; by men who live up to it, and realize its wondrous freshness as they speak. This is the remedy: alas, that by so many preachers, in pulpits and out of them, it is not used.

But again, you will say, Why do you complain of the want of appeals to the unconverted, either in the Church or among Nonconformists? Is it not the theory of any assembly for worship, that it is composed of Christians? Can there be true worship from those who are not such? And why invite those who are within the fold to enter? They need building up in the faith; not persuasion to embrace it.

True: most true. But I need hardly remind you that the normal condition of the Church has long passed away. The “kingdom of Heaven” consists

of wheat and tares; of faithful and unfaithful believers; of covenanted and yet unconverted children. And therefore, just as the compilers of the Prayer-book, understanding this, have constructed a Book of Common Prayer in which are words which may be used by all, and suited to a variety of states; so surely, can no clergyman believe that all his congregation belong to that one true Church which is the "blessed company of all faithful people." And if they do not, and he in his heart believes the fearful alternative, may there not well be excitement in his sermons; the excitement with which one would throw a rope to a drowning man, or wake one slumbering on a precipice.

And then again, even those who are ready for building up, do not get it. If, as Dean Goulburn says, "The office of the Christian ministry is twofold, —to rouse consciences and to guide them," it is to be feared that the majority of sermons do neither the one nor the other. They are not pointed enough to rouse, not strong or deep enough to guide. They are too often mere generality and vagueness,—an uncertain sound, which reaches neither believer nor unbeliever. I was struck by a remark of Mr. I——, when he came in from Church on Good Friday.

"We had a good sermon, all about Christ, and very earnest in its way; but there were no hooks in it."

You think me very critical, I know, if not something worse. But I am rather answering a criticism of yours, being much too sorrowful to criticise myself. Yet perhaps, instead of complaining thus to one another, it is better to take our complaints to God,—better to plead with Him, for His own glory's sake to waken His watchmen that slumber, and bid them cry to the careless ones whether they will bear or whether they will forbear. If we feel there is something wanting in any sermon, the very perception lays upon us a responsibility of prayer. We are not to sit down and moan while there is yet something to be done, and God bids us do it. But it is easier to grieve over an "inefficient ministry," than to set apart an hour to seek for it power from on high.

JOHN IV.

THAT wonderful chapter, the fourth of John, how much unexpected teaching comes out in it under repeated study! Shall I tell you one or two thoughts which struck me as I read it to-day? Not new to many, I am sure, though for me they had their own freshness. First, the "*therefore*" in verse 1: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." Jesus knew how to *time* His work: His "hour was not yet come." He must seek retirement rather than publicity: He could afford to wait for the fulness of time." Is not this what we often forget,—missing thus the fulness of blessing? We see a need, as we think, before us, and we rush on to supply it, often before we are ready. We must ask *when*, about our work, as well as *how*.

And then, that exquisitely life-like picture of the

Saviour, sitting "thus by the well." How natural it all seems: the tired traveller giving in at last to His weariness, and resting in the shade for a little while. It was real fatigue, as real as that sudden recoil of every strained nerve, which you and I know so well at the end of a busy day, when we are apt to declare ourselves "too tired to talk,"—able only to endure. Does He not understand that very feeling, and enter into it, even now."

But His quiet was interrupted (are we not apt to be very impatient when ours is?) "There cometh a women of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." She stands out from the Gospel History in very clear individuality, a kind of Samaritan Magdalene, her strong emotions hidden under apparent carelessness. How little she thought, as she walked from the city to the well, of the blessing which awaited her there: how little we know, in the purposing of each day, what God's purpose for us may be! "He saith to her, Give me to drink." "It was a master-stroke of the great Fisher of souls," says Lange, "to permit that which was earthly to be given to Him, that He might give that which was heavenly." And does He not teach us that, in seeking to do good to others, we must try to find some common link between them and us; must meet them naturally on their own ground, instead of

coming down on them abruptly from ours? There is a hint on the same subject in verse 19. Her words there (I forget where I saw the remark) do not spring merely from a desire to escape an unpleasant subject. Her very silence is an indirect confession of her guilt. She cannot say more about it to this stranger, but she feels, in her inmost heart, that it has separated her from God, and that she therefore needs some sort of atonement, some means of reconciliation. *Hence* the question, Where is the right place of worship? Will not this Prophet teach her how she may pray to God acceptably? If this gift of God is to be hers, she must ask for it aright. And so, I think, we are shown that what seem to us desultory questions, are not always to be slighted. We cannot tell the links which connect them with some real difficulty, which hinders the light of life from shining into the heart.

And yet again (for I pass over much which does not connect itself with one most important *secondary* lesson of the chapter,—its teaching for those who in any way are working for God), have you noticed the result of this woman's mission to her fellow-townsmen? Origen calls her the "Apostle of the Samaritans;" and, in her promptness, she was not unlike him who, after his conversion, "straightway preached Christ in the synagogue." But her "preaching" did

not attract anyone *to her*. "They went out of the city and came *unto Him*:" that is another hint we need. We look, perhaps, at other workers, and envy their power of winning. They seem to fascinate everyone,—all hearts cling to them. And, indeed, it is a precious gift, this of human love,—something to thank God for, if He gives it, even while it humbles. But the question for us is, Are we bringing others *to Him*? Do our words—does our life, so point to Christ that they pass beyond us—forget us entirely. And are we willing that it should be so? Do we seek to have the "beauty of the Lord our God" upon us, not that *we* may be popular, but that He may be glorified?

The subject of this woman's message to the Samaritans is remarkable. She tells them exactly what one would have thought she would withhold, and *vice versa*. She does not speak of the offered gift, or the world-wide spiritual worship, or even of the mysterious Stranger who declared Himself the Messiah. The one thing which had stirred her own heart to its depths, is all she tells over again: "He told me all things that ever I did." The one thing in the Bible which arrest and wins, is just this—what it tells us of ourselves; and this is exactly what we can speak of to others. It is witness which the simplest of us can render,—which the simplest

perhaps *do* render with most power. "One thing I know:" we may not be able to get beyond that; but we can say it firmly, boldly. "One thing I know,—that, whereas I was blind, now I see." "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

INVALID SUNDAYS.

Do you think I was shocked by your confession that "Sundays are a trial to you"? Even if it were so, better say what is really felt than what we think ought to be felt. And many invalids, who seem to acquiesce in the general notion that they have grown accustomed "to being deprived of all outward means of grace," would confess, if they spoke truth, that the longing for them grows only stronger as years roll on, and that they need, more and more, the sustaining help of their Lord to keep it from passing into impatience. We do know (how many can thankfully testify) that when the nether springs are sealed, the upper are often fuller. God sets us apart from man that He may minister to us Himself; and, when He prepares our table our cup is sure to run over: for "He satisfieth" as none other may, and the teaching we receive direct from Him has a fitness for special need which makes it doubly sweet. We have felt Him nearer, learned to know Him

better, when He came to us in a quiet room of pain, than even when we joined the "great congregation," and our prayers seemed lifted up with theirs to the very heart of God.

But still, there is much on the other side: we do miss these outward aids of prayer and ministry and Holy Communion. The absence of them tells most painfully, with many of us, at least, upon our spiritual life. The very cause which shuts us out from them, increases our inability to draw for ourselves from the wells of salvation. A Sunday at home, to one in health, is rather a treat now and then. The long leisure for thinking and reading and prayer; the restful breathing-space in life's over-crowded days,—is a "good gift" which brings its own blessing. But in illness the case is different: you cannot read and think and pray continually. There are many hours when you can do none of the three, and these will seem long, and *must*; for you miss the mechanical employments of other days,—the bit of needle or crochet work which has such a curiously sedative effect, and which, instead of distracting thought, often helps to keep it fixed.

But I can better feel for your Sunday difficulties than I know how to aid them. They are helped much, I believe, by prayer beforehand; special

asking brings special grace. Your High Priest "remembers the days of His flesh," and His Spirit aids, in double measure, the worship which is "compassed with infirmity." You grieve over your weakness; but does He judge you for what His own hand sends? Your inability to think or pray, is a part of your trial. Accept it as such, and bear it "as unto the Lord."

Variety is a great preventive of weariness. Turn from one thing to another as often as you can, with little spaces between of absolute rest. Different subjects for prayer, different kinds of reading, are better than perseverance in the same.

Where there is strength for it, Sunday may be made specially a day for intercession. Many are then engaged in various spheres of Christian work, and those to whom all such are closed may follow them with the pleading which brings power. And this change of interests, with its consequent freshening of thought, has a reflex benefit.

We, who belong to the English branch of the Church Catholic, have one advantage in sickness which we would not gladly forego: we can follow the cycle of teaching which our Christian year brings round. We are fellow-worshippers, in word and thought, with those who keep holyday in the House of God; we know the prayers which will

bring us to their remembrance; we have our part in that petition which shows such wonderful knowledge of the sufferer's need,—that God would “give them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions;” and we know that the sick members have a special place in their Church's care, and that one of her most beautiful Services comes, with its wise and holy teaching, to hallow and soothe their pain.

It has often cheered my Sundays at home thus to join in spirit the worship of others; and it has been my experience that I could do *this* when I have been too prostrate for anything else. I could grasp the sweet familiar words of our Liturgy, when I could not attempt to seek out others for myself, or when it would have been equally impossible to follow any that I did not know. They are a stay for the weakened mind to hold by; an anchorage to keep it from drifting unsteadily out to sea. I can fancy there may be many who will not understand this: perhaps none can fully do so, who have not grown up with the musical roll of our services sounding in their ears from childhood; and some may think it “dreadfully formal” to turn thus to “set words:” to whom I answer that to me there is less formality in using at any time petitions which are *real* to me, than in leaving them for those which are not. For

the rest, St. Paul's rule is wide: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

My letter is made up of digressions, but I come once more to the point. I do not wonder that it is "one of your Sunday trials that others should feel the day so little a delight." They return from morning Service, perhaps, tired and critical, complaining of the cold, or the heat, or the sermon, or the music. Then comes, for some, the afternoon bustle of teaching; for others, perhaps, the afternoon sleep; while evening renews the same complaints, and the close of the day, as it seems to you, has brought only weariness instead of refreshment. It is difficult not to be impatient, when only to hear a hymn sung would be to you an unspeakable delight, and you would be well content with the poorest sermon ever preached, if you might join in "common prayer," and add your Amen at its close. Even once to pass within the church doors, and feel the calm of its hallowed quiet, would be something! And yet they who have so much more can do nothing but grumble! It is hard to have all this irritation added to your own weakness. It makes tenfold more trying your efforts to keep the Sabbath in spirit; for it ruffles and almost provokes you, as a wilful scorning of privileges which you have learned to value by their loss.

Yes: you have learned,—there is the secret; so you must not be angry with those who have not yet had the same lesson put before them. Some knowledge “grows only out of yesterdays:” it cannot be ante-dated. And, besides, we must not forget how, for busy people, the fatigue of the week is often concentrated in the Sunday. Either they are really more engaged on that day, and consequently more exhausted, or else they are undergoing the reaction from some previous strain. Besides, not being all spirit, any more than yourself, you cannot wonder if, after having joined in the public services, they come down to some lower level at home. If *you* cannot continue the whole day on the heights of prayerful meditation, surely you need not expect others to do so. The body will assert itself, even in health.

Thus we go back, how thankfully, to the remembrance of the Sabbath-keeping which remains,—of the Heavenly Temple, whose ceaseless praises know no weariness. Do not look on through the years which, as you think, separate you from its fulness of joy. Remember, rather, that at *any* time your Lord may come, and your hindered prayers be changed in a moment for the new song of praise.

WORK WE CANNOT DO OVER AGAIN.

How well I understand your feeling about the work we cannot do over again! It is very sad, very humbling, to look back and see how different it might have been, how differently we should do it now. And yet, perhaps, this sort of retrospection has its wrong side. It may be a little faithless, more than a little morbid. It should make us watchful; it should not make us despairing. We must learn to cast on our Lord the burden of a *finished* work, as well as of that which is not begun. There is a temptation to take it up and do it over again in our own minds,—very much better, as we think, for we bring experience to this mental review, and can read our mistakes in the light of it. But let us rather leave the past with our Lord: He knows the worst of it, which even we do not; and the failure we can see, let us take to Him in humble confession. Let us tell it out before Him, fully, frankly; and then, with His forgiveness making us

glad, let us "forget the things which are behind." We cannot gather up the broken thread; why should we waste strength in trying? We need that for the present. What has been, or might have been, is beyond our power.

In reference, however, to your special subject of disquiet,—the book which you wonder how you could write, or anyone else read,—I do not think you are a fair judge. You would "write it differently now," you say. Pardon me: you would not write *that* book at all, but quite another. You *could* not, in fact, write it now. The self of ten years ago is entirely unlike the self of to-day: you cannot feel, or see, as you felt and saw then, because you cannot travel backwards and occupy the same point of view. "The rest we cannot recreate; ourselves we cannot reinstate, or set ourselves to the same key of the remembered harmony."

"Then I wish I had waited," you will say. "How many more my words would have reached, if I had not been in such haste to speak them!" Possibly: but they would *not* have reached some hearts to which they went straight home, and in which they have been a seed of life and health. The same thing is true of all teaching that is living and not formal. You look back and sigh, "How differently I should speak or write if I could give my message

again!" But if, indeed, you asked it from God,—if from the felt need of your own heart you sought to meet the need of others, you may be sure that it was not in vain you gave what you received. We pray for daily bread, and obtain it: but what you live by now, you would have been once unable to appropriate; you had not grown to the want of it. It could not have satisfied, because it would not have suited you. Even so, supposing for a moment that it had been possible for you to minister it to others, it might not have been "food convenient" for them, any more than for you.

No: each stage of life has its own experience; its own sore strain and conflict. And only when we are passing through it can we speak of it as it really is. Pain which we have *lived over*, is softened in remembrance, and we are apt to estimate it too lightly: drifted into smooth waters, we forget the tossing through which we reached them; and the perplexities we look back to, we can hardly realize. They would not perplex us now, and it is difficult to believe they ever did. When our path lies in light, we can scarcely recal the uncertainty and bewilderment of feeling our way in darkness; hence, our sympathy is less intense for those who are following in the way behind us. We can indeed say to them, "There is smoother road before you: I have reached

it, and I know ;" but we forget how weary they are meanwhile,—how weary we were as we passed through the same straits. I think help comes to us most in such need, so far as it may from any human source, through those who are "companions," if not in "tribulation," at least in the difficulty and doubt which have their own trial.

Must we not believe that not one word spoken for God, if it has been a true word, uttered straight from the heart as He laid it there, will be allowed to fall fruitless ? It is given to few, perhaps, to speak those which shall be remembered *in themselves*. Only now and then come the mighty masters, whose sayings ring on through the ages. But, if we have touched one heart in the next street, strengthened in holiness one life, however lowly, we have not lived in vain. Silent as the dew, and as secret, may our influence be ; but if God has used it,—taken it up, as it were, into His mighty scheme of working, we need ask no more. I believe He has so used your book. You wonder now, how anyone can read it : would not like to be condemned to read it yourself. Probably not : it would be a pity if all that has come and gone since you wrote, had left you at precisely the same point, going on still with the same "exercise" of heart, by whose sharp pressure you were constrained to give others what none had

given you. And in any life of true growth there must always be a certain dissatisfaction in looking back to the lower stages of it. But they who stand where you stood once, feel that they are *met on their own ground*; and accordingly I have seen those poor despised pages covered with pencil marks, and not seldom blistered with tears. And remember that this would have been the same though you had never known it. We sow in hope; but the springing seed may never bless our sight here: yet if its harvest may be gathered in the garner of God, is it not for this we have toiled?

And, after all, if indeed your writing *was* a "mistake," what then? Humility, surely, but *not despondency*. Even looking at this subject in its widest and saddest aspect, shall we believe that the shadow of our own error must rest on us for ever? If we have confessed it to our Father, can we doubt that He is faithful and just to forgive—mighty to restore? It may be that, through the meek patient living out of these very mistakes, we are to reach that "end of the Lord" which is folded up and hidden in each of our lives. "He is forever making up for us our own undoings." If, as He solemnly warns us, He can "curse our blessings," His transmuting power can equally "turn the curse into a blessing." The wrong step and the wrong path, He

may, in answer to our penitent cry, make to lead on at last through green pastures. Let us only lay our hand in His, and cleave to Him wholly, trust Him fully, believing that, through all the confusion into which our waywardness or blindness may have led us, He can make a way for us into His own perfect order.

At any rate, lay this rule down and keep to it,—do not go back to the work you cannot do over again. Let the tangled stitches go: we may not put them straight here, but we cannot tell what may be given us out of these imperfect beginnings when we come out into the light yonder.

FINIS.

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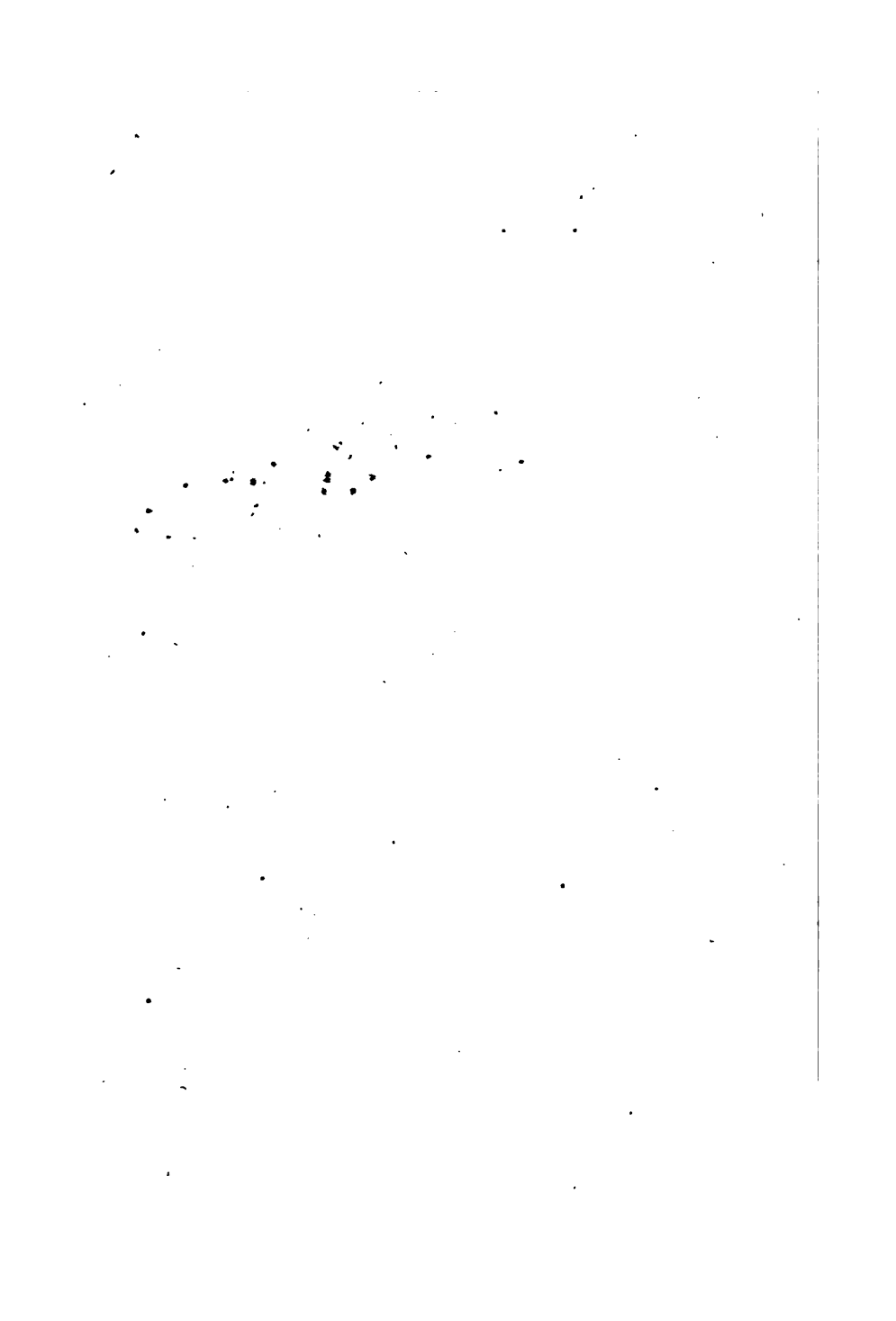
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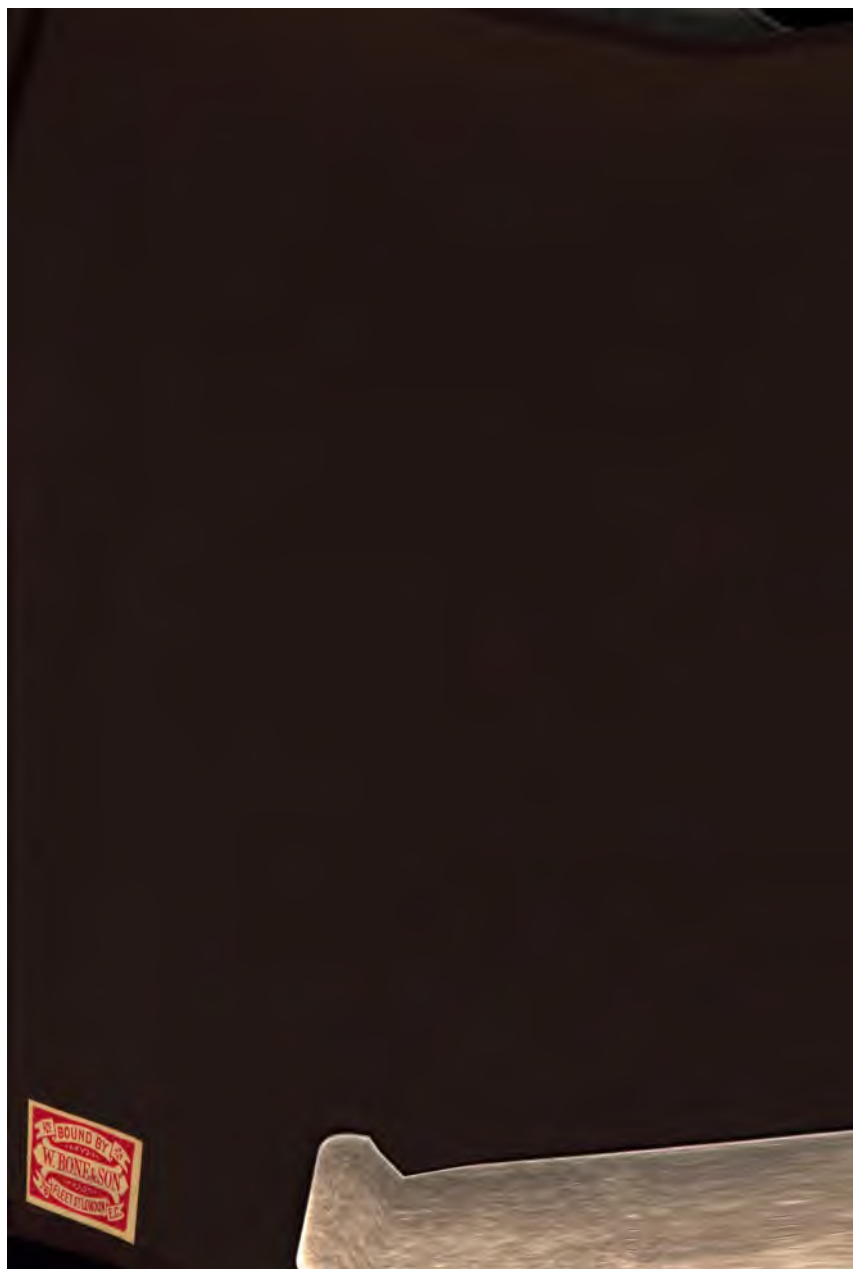
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